

Sermon Title: On Getting Ready for Greatness

March 6, 2022

Biblical Passage: Luke 4:1-14

Passage Background and Summary

In this passage, the writer of Luke depicts Jesus's temptation in the wilderness. Jesus "returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (v. 2). He had been fasting for forty days, and it was following that time that he was tempted by the devil or the adversary. First, the devil tells him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread" (v. 3). Next, the devil showed him "the kingdoms of the world," and said, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority..." (vv. 6-7). Then the devil took him to a peak and said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you'" (vv. 9-10). Each time Jesus responds with the word of the Lord and refuses to be tempted by the adversary. Following that time of fasting and testing in the wilderness, Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee.

Sermon Points

Too often we observe greatness in other people without giving sufficient attention to what it takes to get there. Too often we worship the creature rather than the creator or are impressed with the product while ignoring the process. Yet, we are all called to greatness. In this passage, we find Jesus getting ready for greatness. The text is about the private activity that leads to the public ministry. The passage says the Spirit led him into the wilderness. The wilderness is a place of preparation before you get to where you're going. Those who desire greatness will be tempted, and this is a time to prove their character and faithfulness. Just as this is a time for Jesus to wrestle with self-identity as the adversary questions his identity. The adversary has a way of questioning your identity to try to take you off course, but you have to know that you are a child of God and listen for God's voice. Temptation shows up when you're in a vulnerable place. Just like Jesus was hungry following his forty days and nights of fasting, temptation may come when you're hungry for companionship, hungry for accolades, hungry for a sense of worth and value in this world. We have to be vigilant and keep in mind three lessons from Jesus's time in the wilderness.

1. **"Command This Stone to Become a Loaf of Bread": To be great, we have to resist the temptation of self-service.** This temptation was not about making bread because Jesus multiplied bread and fish to feed thousands; however, Jesus understands that he doesn't just make bread to feed himself but to feed the multitudes. We have to resist the temptation to turn service into self-service. We have to make sure all children have access to the promise and know that our gifts are not for us but to lift somebody else up. To be great, you have to give yourself over to something larger than yourself.
2. **"Worship Me, It Will All Be Yours": To be great, we have to resist the temptation of self-aggrandizement or self-worship.** The Bible says the devil led him up, and we have to realize that not every elevation is necessarily a promotion. We have to realize that it's not about us. In society, we can be tempted to worship ourselves and want other people to worship us. We have entire industries built up around self-aggrandizement that says, 'Look at me. Look at what I'm doing. Look at what I achieved.' Applause and accolades are alright; however, we can't become addicts to other people's acknowledgements of us.

3. **“Throw Yourself Down from Here”:** To be great, we have to resist the temptation of self-destruction. The devil knows how to twist scripture, but Jesus resists the non-sensical impulse to self-destruction. We, like spiritual toddlers, are sometimes prone to test the limits of spiritual behavior; we can be reckless and self-destructive in testing the limits of God’s love, God’s grace, and God’s mercy. There are spiritual laws like there are physical laws. The higher up you go, the harder the fall and the more damage you cause to those on the ground.

God will make you great, but you’ve got to get over yourself. You’ve got to resist self-service, self-aggrandizement, and self-destruction. We must be willing to give ourselves over to God and realize that greater is He that is in me, than He who is in the world. We must bow to the one who is truly great.

Reflection Questions

1. What famous people that you admire? Do you know much about the process it took to get them to where they are?
2. Have you ever felt like you were in the wilderness and/or being tempted? How did you respond?
3. Have you ever witnessed someone make an instance of service about themselves? Share an example.
4. What are some industries that lift up self-aggrandizement?
5. Have you ever witnessed spiritual self-destructive behavior? Share an example.
6. What are some ways that we can practically resist self-service, self-aggrandizement, and self-destruction?