

The True Israel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 December 2024

Preacher: Stephen Murray

[0 : 00] Luke 4 and verses 1 to 13 is where we're going to be this morning. Listen to these words.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell the stone to become bread. Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone.

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

And he said to him, I will give you all their authority and splendor.

It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will be yours.

Jesus answered, It is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

[1 : 09] The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, Throw yourself down from here, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully.

They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone. Jesus answered, It is said, Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. This is the word of the Lord. Let's ask for God's help. Gracious God and King, we want to live by that word, not by bread alone, but by your word.

And so we ask that you would take your word this morning and you would bury it in our hearts. You would show us your truth, and you would change and transform us by the truth that we see there.

Allow us to see your Son clearly, our Savior, our Lord, our Redeemer.

Allow us to marvel at who he is and what he has done for us. May that be the thing that really grips our hearts and moves us to walk in the ways that you've set for us.

[2 : 27] Be present by your Spirit now, we pray, for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. So it's the final Sunday in Advent and the final part of our little mini Advent series as we think through some of the different things that we are as a people longing for as we await our coming Savior.

Now, ever since Nelson Mandela and Matt Damon lifted up the Rugby World Cup above their heads, or Francois Pinal, I think there's always been a kind of a populist strain of sort of lay political thought in our country that if we could all just pull together as a nation, South Africa would easily be the best country in the world.

I mean, who wouldn't want to live here? If we could just transcend all of our racial and cultural differences, if we could improve the economy, provide better education, better rule of law, root out corruption, if we all came together at all levels of society, we'd have a little slice of utopia here on the southern tip of Africa.

I mean, America's got all their weird natural disasters, Australia's got all the creatures that are trying to kill you and mullets, and then Europe's got just bad weather. So like if we could pull everything together, where would you rather be then in South Africa?

Now, Advent, like we said all the way through this series, Advent is about longing. It's the key theme in Advent really, is longing. Longing for a better world. Longing to be better people. Longing to have everything that is bad and wrong and difficult go away and be done with.

[4 : 02] And I think one of the things that we long for is a new nation. A nation without strife. A nation without hatred or corruption. A nation all pulling in the same direction with love for their fellow neighbor as the key kind of ethic between us.

I mean, imagine what your morning commute to work would be like if that was the case. We could dream about what that world would be like. In the Old Testament, when God goes to work undoing

the fall, and everything bad that's come out of the fall, He starts by making a nation. It's actually quite a surprise. That's how He goes to fix everything that's wrong with this world. He makes a nation. The people of Israel. The children of Abraham. But like us, and like so many nations today, they barely get out of the starting blocks before all of the sins that are common to humanity start to rear their ugly head.

And so throughout the text of Scripture, what you've got, as you read through the Old Testament progressively, is you've got this longing for a true and better nation. A true and better Israel. And so that's what we're going to talk about this morning for a little bit. Now we're not going to, like we've done in every other sermon in this series, we're not actually going to the Old Testament. We're actually going to be in the New Testament. The passage we just read. The famous temptation of Jesus passage.

[5 : 21] And I think you'll see why. Because notice how this passage opens up. Chapter 4, verse 1, and to the kind of the first part of verse 2 there.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.

So there's some massive clues right there in that very first sentence about what this passage might be about. 40 days in the wilderness. Those sort of things should ring some bells in the back of your head if you've been anywhere in your Sunday school or you've read your Bible at all.

The nation of Israel wandered for 40 years. In the wilderness. Before entering the promised land. In fact, Moses, who led them during that time, Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, at the end of that time of wandering, he actually gives us an explanation as to why Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years.

And that explanation sounds a whole lot like these opening few sentences here in Luke chapter 4. So this is what Moses says all the way back in the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 1 to 2.

[6 : 31] He says, Be careful to follow every command I'm giving you today so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land. Possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

Now, I know you can't see this because you don't have the original languages in front of you, but verse 2 there is almost word for word the same as verse 1 of Luke chapter 4. So in the rules of sort of biblical interpretation, interpreting the Bible 101, that's like a giant 20-foot neon sign saying, whatever you make of the temptation story in Luke chapter 4, you had better connect it to Israel's temptation story in the wilderness, their testing in the wilderness.

See, Luke, I think, is basically saying to us, we've seen now what Israel did in the Old Testament. We've read that story. We watched that movie. Is Jesus any better?

Let's see if Jesus is the true and better Israel. And so there's two things I want you to see this morning. Number one, I want you to see the tests that Jesus faces. And then number two, I want you to see the resistance that Jesus offers in those tests.

[7 : 59] So the tests he faces and then the resistance that he offers. Here's the first lot, the tests. So there are three tests that the devil throws his way. The first test is what we might call a test of obedience.

So look at verse 1. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. And so the devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell the stone to become bread. So from what we can tell, it seems Jesus was fasting.

Sent by God to fast, and he's hungry. He's been fasting. And fasting in the Bible is a discipline that worshipers of God undertake to really help them focus more on God.

That means now, having done this for a really long time, it's not like a half-day fast or something like that, not this intermittent fasting that some of us do. This is the end of 40 days.

[8 : 58] He's ravenously hungry. And so the devil takes this as an opportune time then to tempt him. I heard one minister say it this way, that the devil tempts Jesus to turn a boulder into a baguette.

Now you say, well, what would exactly be wrong with that? What would be wrong with Jesus kind of clicking his fingers and turning the rocks into a sushi buffet? I think we need to understand this in context of the idea of a fast.

So the purpose of a fast is an unbroken time of absolute concentration and submission to God. That's what you're doing when you fast, especially if you're doing a 40-day fast like this. It's like, I want to focus just on God.

I want singular focus here. We're told at the beginning of the chapter that Jesus was led by the Spirit of God into the desert to go and fast. So God is calling him. This is not, I feel like I should do this.

God is calling him into this deep time of undivided reflection and solitude. Eating nothing symbolizes depending upon God for all of your needs. That's the whole point of the exercise.

[10:04] And so if he eats, if he breaks the fast prematurely, well then he contradicts the Spirit of God. He contradicts the Spirit of God leading him into this moment of fasting. He disobeys.

And so the first test is really a test of obedience. Will he be obedient and depend upon God in this instance? Now this is the same big issue that Israel faced in the wilderness.

Will Israel be obedient to God? So I want you to listen to the rest of that passage that I read from Deuteronomy chapter 8. Read from verse 2. This was Moses speaking to the people.

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger, and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

[11:04] Your clothes did not wear out, and your feet did not swell during these 40 years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

God clearly has Israel's back all the way through these wilderness wanderings. He feeds their hunger. He quenches their thirst. So you go, are they obedient in response?

And the pretty clear answer is no, they're not. Just days after crossing the Red Sea, they begin grumbling and they're moaning and they protest against God that God doesn't really care about them, which is ludicrous. When Moses disappears up a mountain for a couple of days to commune with God and get the Ten Commandments at Sinai, Israel builds a golden calf and they plunge themselves into drunken, pagan revelry.

God was testing them to see if they would be obedient, and they just failed miserably from start to finish. Will Jesus fail like them?

Will he fail the test of obedience? Well, we'll come back and we'll answer that just now. Let's look at the second test. The second test we might call a test of worship.

[12:14] So look at verse 5. Now here I think the devil's sort of playing off some of the themes that we saw two weeks ago in Jesus' baptism.

So remember we spoke about this. We said that Jesus' baptism, we see Jesus being anointed as this rightful king of the world, but it's not fully consummated yet. And so the devil is sort of offering him a fast track to realizing all that authority.

If you've ever been in like really, really big airports around the world, like in Atlanta or something like that, you'll know that when you've got to get from one terminal to another, especially like if you've changed airlines or something and there's all sorts of confusion, then they've got these travelators, these long moving floors to get you somewhere fast.

And so you can get somewhere pretty fast. You can walk at a decent pace and you just move past everybody else. The devil is basically putting a long travelator in front of Jesus, saying just skip the queue here. Get on this and you'll get past everybody else and you'll get to the front of the line.

If you bow down and worship me instead of God the Father. Now at this point, if you're familiar with the story of Israel in the desert, you're thinking golden calf, right?

[13:43] Golden calf. It's Israel in the desert all over again, faced with two choices really. Worship God who's up on Mount Sinai where Moses has gone, and they've seen it because there's clouds and there's thunders and there's loud noise, and they know God is up there.

Or maybe a better idea, melt down all your jewelry, make a golden calf, have a drunken pagan revelry party. Which one do they choose? If you don't know the story, they chose the calf.

God was testing them, and Moses says this explicitly in Deuteronomy 8. God was testing them to see if they would remain true in their heart worship of him. And so we read Luke 4 and we say, will Jesus fail like them?

Will he fail the test of true worship? And we'll come back to that in a moment. Third test. This one we call the test of trust. Look at verse 9.

The devil led Jesus to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here. For it is written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully.

[14:49] They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone. The devil, I think, tries to make Jesus doubt his father's goodness here.

There's one or two commentators that think the same thing here. So good fathers, in any kind of good father-child relationship, good fathers build trust in their children, right?

Like when they're learning to walk, you stand close and you put your arms so they can see you trust and you build trust. You don't build trust in the way that I built trust when I was teaching my kids to swim. So I listened to all these other parents whose kids are smaller than mine now, and they talk about how they take their kids to swimming lessons and all that sort of stuff.

And I did some of that stuff, but my method was basically throw the kid into the water and see if they can get back to me. And when they start sinking and their eyes start going big, then I grab them and I pull them out. And eventually, after a while, they did eventually get back to me and now they can all swim.

And so I don't really see what's wrong with that. They might have some trust issues later in life, but they can swim. But good fathers build trust in their children.

[15:56] Here I think the devil is trying to sow seeds of doubt in Jesus' mind regarding the goodness of his father. I mean, would a good father send you into the desert for 40 days with no food?

Really? Really, really? Now, again, that's why Israel were in the desert in the first place. It was their big trust test, according to Moses.

That's explicitly what Moses says. You were put in the desert to test your hearts, Moses says, to see if your hearts were trusting in God as your rescuer and as your provider. And basically, Israel, just through their obedience, you see this, through their obedience, they just refused to rest in the arms of God as their rescuing provider.

To say, I hope you've got this. Even when it came down to something like providing manna, and God said, just pick on these days and on this day, they would still go and pick on the other days. Just we're not resting and trusting in God as their provider.

And so will Jesus, will he fail like them? Will he fail to give his father his complete trust? And so we'll come back to that in a moment. Three tests we've got here.

[17:11] I think what they do for us, and particularly with the connection with ancient Israel, is they highlight the human condition for us. They say, this is what we are like as people. They highlight what the Bible says is our fundamental problem.

That is, we don't trust God to rule over this world that he created. We don't worship him as a creator God. And therefore we don't obey him as God.

You see, for many people today, believing in God, or believing in the existence of God, is not actually the biggest hurdle. That's not the biggest problem. There are very, very few pure atheists in this world.

The biggest problem is the idea of absolutely trusting and worshipping and obeying God. Most people believe in God to some extent.

It's not that unpopular. It's when you start saying, well, you've got to devote your whole life to him. Completely. Then people are like, well, that's a little bit fundamentalist. You're a little bit of a religious zealot.

[18:13] Now, I've always thought, if you think about the logic of that whole thing, and this happens even in kind of church-going Christian circles, it's a little bit strange. And I'll tell you why. For argument's sake, say you're coming as a complete skeptic, but for argument's sake, say God exists.

The God of the Bible exists. According to the Bible, God is all-powerful. He's all-knowing. He's all-loving. He's kind. He's generous. He's good. He has standards.

He definitely has standards. He's holy. He hates injustice and sin and law-breaking. But he is supremely good, and he is supremely loving and gracious. In fact, the Bible goes so far to say that he is love.

That is, the only reason we know what love is is because we know God. He is the essence of love, the embodiment of love. And so he's this all-powerful, all-loving God.

If that God exists, why wouldn't you want to live your life in absolute submission to him? Do we not want to live lives of good, of love, of joy, like we spoke about earlier, joy and delight?

[19 : 23] All those things are said to be found supremely in him and in a life devoted to him. So for many of us, if you're prepared to take the first step that the God of the Bible actually exists, you really have no kind of logical or intellectual persuasive reason for not then going the full way and submitting the whole of your life to him all of the time.

And so then the question comes, well, why don't we? Why don't we? I mean, I saw some of you nodding now when I was making that case. So you're nodding.

So why don't we? Why don't we live in obedience all the time? Why would we likely fail these tests just like Israel did? I suspect that the answer lies in the fact that there are three tests.

There's not just a test of obedience. It goes deeper than obedience. There's a test of worship and there is a test of trust. If you only ever think of submission to God in terms of obedience, in terms of things you do wrong or right in his eyes, you will never understand then why you fail to obey.

You'll always battle with that. You need to see that the problem actually goes deeper than that, than obedience. It goes all the way to worship and ultimately trust to the heart. That's what Moses said.

[20 : 45] God is testing your hearts, not testing your actions. He can tell what's going on in your heart by your actions. He's testing your hearts. See, you look at Israel. Think about this. You look at Israel and just days after crossing the Red Sea with God wiping out the armies of Egypt, they're mumbling and they're grumbling against God.

And you think, what a ridiculous bunch of people. How obvious is their disobedience? Look how ungrateful they are. Look how obvious their disobedience is.

But then you get to Mount Sinai, and suddenly the reason for their disobedience becomes a little clearer. Because Moses goes up the mountain and they build a calf.

They worship. That's what they do. They worship. They are by nature worshipers. They worship.

Their hearts are not engaged with God in worship, engaged with something else in worship.

What's the main, think about this as well, what's their main complaint every single time that they grumble through the first five books of Moses? Their main complaint is, God doesn't care about us.

[21 : 56] God doesn't care about us. We were better off in Egypt. Those are trust issues. Israel has massive trust issues with God.

Even though they've seen a whole lot of stuff objectively that should take those trust issues away, they have continual trust issues with God. He parted the Red Sea. But in their hearts, they're not engaged in worship, and they're not engaged in trust.

The reason you don't obey God the way you'd like to is probably not because you aren't intellectually convinced that you should obey God. The reason you don't obey God the way that you would like to is probably because your heart is worshiping something else, and your trust is vested in something else.

Other than God, to carry you through this wilderness of life. To hold you through the wilderness of life. To get you to the other side. To rescue and provide for you. And so what you need is, you need heart reorientation.

You need that heart to change. Now you say, well how do you get that? How do I get that reorientation? Well look, look at how Jesus responds to the devil's temptations. Look at the resistance he offers.

[23 : 06] So the first temptation. Look how he responds to this one. The obedience test. The devil says, turn this boulder into a baguette. Here's how Jesus responds. Verse 4.

Jesus answered, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone. So Jesus quotes scripture. He quotes the Bible back to the devil. He doesn't just sort of suck it up and see who can outlast the other person here.

He goes to scripture, and he goes to that very passage in Deuteronomy chapter 8 that we read earlier that explains God's intentions during the wilderness wanderings.

That's how we know we're not just making up this connection between the desert wanderings and what's going on here in Luke 4. And God's intention there in sending Jesus into that 40 day period of hunger was so that he would see that man does not live on bread alone.

He'd experience it. He'd have a very visceral experience of it. Man does not live on bread alone. Now the rest of that Deuteronomy passage which we read earlier tells us how man should live, not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

[24 : 13] You see what Jesus is saying to the devil by quoting that scripture is he's saying, I have a sustenance that you know nothing of, Mr. Devil. I have something that feeds me like no earthly meal can ever feed me.

I have something that ultimately takes away the deepest hunger of our hearts and that is the word of the Lord. And you don't understand that. See the reason you might be floundering right now in the wilderness of life, the reason you might be struggling to obey God is because you're actually feeding in the wrong place.

Your ultimate sustenance comes from a bunch of different places rather than the word of God. You're basically at the wrong restaurant.

You're feeding at the wrong restaurant. So I'll give you some examples. When you derive your deepest sense of self and happiness from the approval that you get from other people rather than from the approval that you get from God promised in scripture, well that's the sign that you're feeding at the wrong restaurant.

When you derive your primary sense of well-being from what happens to your finances rather than from how you are spiritually rich according to the great promises of the Bible, well that's a sign that you're feeding at the wrong restaurant.

[25 : 38] You can't live by bread alone, the Bible says. You need every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Look at Jesus' response to the second temptation, the test of worship.

The devil says, take the fast track. Take the fast track to having everyone in this world worship you. Bow the knee to me and then everybody else will bow the knee to you.

Here's how Jesus responds. Verse 8, he answered, it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only. Worship God only, he says.

And again, he's quoting scripture back at the devil. This time he goes two chapters earlier in the book of Deuteronomy. He goes to Deuteronomy chapter 6. Now it's interesting that the passage that he quotes goes on to say, worship God only.

Oh by the way, God is a jealous God who wants worship exclusively for himself. And should the Israelites worship him exclusively, it will go well for them as they go into the promised land.

[26 : 44] I always used to find that idea a little bit weird. that God is a jealous God. Didn't you? I mean, you're being raised, if your parents raised you right, then they're taught you that jealousy is a bad thing. Don't be jealous, it's not a good thing.

So why is it acceptable for God to be jealous? Well here is why. At least one of the reasons why. Our human jealousy is always born out of something we want that we don't have really.

It's very similar to coveting, the idea of coveting. So we don't have something, we see that somebody else has got that, possessions or status or approval or beauty. Somebody else has it, we want it and so it provokes jealousy in us.

But God, who exists eternally as Father, Son and Spirit in perfect union, He's not in need of anything. He does not need anything.

There's nothing in this universe that He created that He could possibly want that He does not already have. That is the definition of being perfect within yourself. He doesn't need our worship. He doesn't need you to come in here and acknowledge Him.

[27 : 48] He doesn't have a pity party when you forget to pray to Him one day or forget to come to church and He's like, oh I'm so sad now. Stephen didn't say his prayers this morning. So why is He jealous for worship?

It's more than one reason but one of the main reasons that He must be jealous is because His jealousy somehow benefits us and is an expression of His love.

That's why in Deuteronomy 6 it says, worship God alone. He's a jealous God and if you worship Him alone it'll go well for you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Now I always read that last part as kind of a reward from God. Worship God and these things will go well for you. Here's your reward in the promised land and it is a reward for Israel should they

worship God but it's more than that.

It is also God's desire and intention for His people. That's what He wants for us. He's jealous for worship because He's jealous to see His people live well in the land.

[28 : 58] His divine jealousy is an expression of His divine love. It's nothing like human jealousy. God is jealous.

Here's the crazy thing to think about. God is jealous for an exclusive relationship with you. He loves you that much. Worship Him alone.

Third temptation. The test of trust. Look how Jesus responds. The devil gets crafty at this point. He quotes Scripture back to Jesus.

He must think he's real smart having done that. He tells Jesus to throw himself off of the highest point of the temple and then see if God sends some angels to come and break His fall.

Test God He's saying. Here's how Jesus responds in verse 12. Jesus answered it is said do not put the Lord your God to the test.

[30 : 00] Now again it's a quote you should be used to this by now it's a quote from the Old Testament it's a quote from Deuteronomy chapter 6. Same chapter as the previous quote. Same broader section as the previous quote. Don't test God rather obey Him and it will go well for you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

In fact listen to the last two verses this is from the block of teaching that comes in Deuteronomy 6. Moses says do what is right and good in the Lord's sight so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors thrusting out all your enemies before you as the Lord said.

See this is this is the trust test and so Jesus quotes back the promise of God to the devil. God has promised the promised land.

He has promised to cast out all the enemies before Israel and Jesus unswervingly holds on to this commitment this promise.

He has unwavering commitment to this promise and it's even its ultimate fulfillment way beyond ethnic Israel the nation of Israel. Nothing actually will deter Him from His commitment to this promise not even the temptations of the devil.

[31 : 17] In fact He's so committed He's so obedient He's so worshipful of His Father that He goes to the cross. He goes to the cross to bring about an ultimate fulfillment to all of God's good promises.

He goes to the cross and there He defeats the devil once and for all and so Deuteronomy chapter 6 is actually fulfilled. The enemy is thrust out. The devil along with our greatest enemy sin and death is defeated and thrust out.

Jesus succeeds where Israel fails. He is the true and better Israel and we as children we are united to Him by faith.

We get to bask in the glory of His victory. We just share in that. By ourselves we're not strong enough. We're not strong enough to conjure appropriate levels of worship and trust and obedience. We're like Israel. Given those tests we fail. We need someone to pass the tests on our behalf. We need Christ to be the obedient Son of God the true Israel and pass those tests on our behalf.

[32 : 21] We need Him to be obedient unto death for us. We need to worship God alone for us. We need Him to trust in the promises of God for us. Here's a little bit of theological conjecture for you.

Don't fire me for this. Don't tell the presbytery about this. Verse 13 the very end of this little section says that after failing to tempt Jesus the devil went off to wait for a more opportune time.

So presumably he's going to go at him again. Have another shot. Thought he could get him but he's now going to have another shot. See because I wonder if in that last test if he had really hoped Jesus would maybe follow through and throw himself off the temple.

Let's see. Maybe he'll actually do it. Maybe the devil thought imagine if Jesus jumps and the angels don't come and break his fall. Like maybe they're on a lunch break or something and they just forget and he jumps plunges to his dead.

They would solve a lot of problems for me the devil thinks. Really, really, really solve a lot of things in this age old war that I've been waging. Get this Messiah guy out of the way.

[33 : 34] And so then imagine how the devil felt when Jesus was bound to a block of wood and a Roman soldier was beating him senselessly with a leather whip made of exposed bones and stone.

Imagine how the devil must have felt then having seen him being beaten within an inch of his life. Jesus then has a cross put on his back and he's marched up a hill to a place called Golgotha. Imagine how the devil must have felt when the people in the city started spitting on Jesus and mocking him as he stumbled by. Imagine how the devil must have felt when the nails were driven into his hands and into his feet.

How he must have felt when Jesus cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Doesn't sound like you're trusting much there at that point, right? Imagine how he might have felt when Jesus breathed out his last and said, it is finished.

I can imagine that the devil thought he'd won the lottery. victory. This is the best thing ever. It's the best Christmas present I ever had. Victory was his, this age-old battle with God, it just unbelievably swung in his favor.

[34 : 48] Can imagine wicked and twisted delight flowing up inside of his heart. And yet he missed the details. He missed the significance of what was happening.

You see, the test that he gave Jesus back in the wilderness, that was like the class test that you do in March or something. That wasn't the big test, that wasn't the end of year exam on obedience, on worship, on trust.

The cross was that exam. The cross was that final exam on obedience, worship, and trust. And Jesus by dying for the disobedient, idol-worshipping, faithless humanity, he passed that test with flying colors, ensuring our forgiveness, our victory, and the devil's doom.

Jesus is the true and better Israel, who has passed the test for you. That's what he did. And here's what he wants you to do now. He wants you to put the pen down on your own life tests.

You remember that? I was one of those people who walked out of exams really early because I wrote what I knew and then there's no point in going over it again. I left, made everyone else nervous I was leaving so early.

[36 : 19] So I was never really there at the end when the teacher would say, pens down. But I know some of you diligence students are probably there at the end. When the teacher said pens down.

Jesus is saying that to us. In terms of these ultimate things, in terms of where we give our ultimate worship and our ultimate trust and our ultimate obedience, pens down. You can't fix these things by yourself. You can't make yourself the perfect nation, the perfect Israel.

Pens down. I will write the test for you. Live in my victory. I've passed it for you. Take my marks. Take my record. I give it to you. I gift it to you. Live with that. You can put that certificate on your wall, in your office.

Your own achievements pale in comparison. He's saying, I'm giving you my achievements. Put the pen down. And when you do that, and when you see the manner in which he passed the test for you, his death on the cross, when you see that manner, when you see the love, when you see the extent of the jealousy of God for your exclusive worship, that his son would go to the cross to secure that worship, that obedience and that trust, when you see his sacrificial love, and you put the pen down and stop trying to earn his love your own ways, that's when you'll be changed.

[37 : 49] That's when you'll now start to submit in worship and obedience and trust, God is looking for in those wonderings, now he will have it because he has broken it by his son.

Put the pen down and put your faith in Jesus Christ this morning. Let's pray. Our gracious God and our heavenly father, we want to thank you for your son.

thank you for his work on our behalf because we know who we are in this story. We are not Jesus fighting off the devil by quoting scripture.

We are Israel failing over and over and over again. So we praise you for your son. We praise you that he has passed the test for us.

Won't you teach us to stop looking in all the wrong places, to, in terms of worship, in terms of what we are trusting in this life to get us through the wilderness.

[39 : 02] Won't you show us that everything we need is in Christ. Won't you teach us to truly rest in his saving work. And then won't you transform us through that.

So having rested in Christ, now may we be obedient and live in holiness and worship trusting you. Lord, I pray for any person who's here this morning who has never trusted in Christ, who has never repented of their sin and said, I can't save myself.

Jesus, you saved me. I pray that you would bring them to faith this morning. For the rest of us, Lord, grow us in this. It's a battle. We so often feel like Israel rather than your son in this situation. Our weaknesses are exposed daily, but help us to keep resting in our Savior. We keep growing in holiness and obedience to you. We ask this all for Christ's sake and his glory. Amen. Amen.