

Luke through LENT
Lent 1 - Hard Start. - Luke 4:1-15
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A few months ago we moved from the paradise of Kangaroo Island to the paradise of Noosa and the Sunshine Coast. It felt like the paradise of Kangaroo Island was lost after the bushfires a couple of years ago, and with the recent flooding it has felt like paradise up here has been lost too.

In 1667 John Milton published his epic poem: "Paradise Lost". He saw the way that Paradise was lost for all of us in Genesis Chapter 3 when Adam and Eve turned away from God. Paradise was really lost when people chose their own selfish way instead of God's way.

Milton published a sequel 4 years later: "Paradise Regained."

If Paradise is lost ... if all humanity fails in Genesis Three ... then where would we find paradise regained? Is it in the birth of Christ? Is it in His death on the cross for all of us? Is it in His victorious resurrection? Milton chose today's passage, the temptation of Christ as his focus for Paradise Regained.

I like his choice, not simply because it gives a good opener for this sermon, but because it shows that Jesus overcomes at the same point as Adam and Eve's failure. He is victorious where they fell flat. And because of Jesus' victory, there is the possibility for every human being to be included in the renewed, renovated, wonderful paradise of the New Creation by simply trusting in Jesus.

Adam is the representative human who represents all humanity. And in 1 Corinthians 15 Jesus is called the last Adam. He is the next representative human, Jesus can fully stand in our place.

So, Milton says, standing in the place of Adam, our place, Jesus overcame the temptation that ensnared the first Adam.

The two temptations are easy enough to compare.

On the one hand Adam was fed, watered and had the freedom to eat anything from the lush garden except the one tree. On the other hand, Jesus came from a time of fasting, forty days of it, where he had no food and only a little water, and he was in the wilderness. Adam was not in want or in need, Jesus was ... to put it mildly ... absolutely famished.

Satan's challenge for Jesus to turn the stone into bread didn't just appeal to Jesus' immense hunger. The temptation was to question God's provision and care. The temptation was for Jesus to live independently of God, to provide for himself, to take care of himself, rather than to depend on God.

To fight this temptation Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8.3 "Man shall not live on bread alone." And the rest of that verse says, "but you live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Jesus

argued that life is sustained, energised and run by more than food. **Life** is ...being in relationship with God, listening to and receiving the Word He speaks.

The rich, abundant life that Jesus modelled for us is one which recognises that God is our sustainer: More than our food, our breath, our water, God is the one behind it all, providing each meal, giving each breath and the water we need.

The second temptation also relates to Jesus' Sonship, and dependence on His Father's provision and plan. Satan tempted Jesus by showing him all the kingdoms of the world. He twisted the truth and told Jesus that he could give him all authority.

This was doubly deceptive because Satan did have some authority on earth and because it was Jesus' destiny to rule on the throne of David, to rule in his kingdom that will never end.

So, taking authority when He was tempted by the Devil would have been like taking a shortcut to receive what he was going to get anyway. But in order to take the shortcut Jesus would have to worship the devil.

Clearly, that went against the purposes of God and to reject that temptation, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6.13, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'

We recently focused on 2 Tim 3.16 which tells us, "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Jesus knew the power of Scripture and used it to fight the temptations he faced.

It's good to notice that each of Jesus' replies were confident and brief. He didn't hang around, examining the temptations and giving them a chance to grow or become more appealing. In the same way, if you find yourself tempted to sin, to disobey God, then it pays to say "No!" to the temptation and quickly move on, don't just hang around and allow yourself to be tempted more and more.

The third temptation involved a vision-like experience.

Picturing the highest point of the temple, around 450 feet above the ground, Jesus was tempted to test God's promised protection and care. In order to make the deception stronger, the devil quoted Scripture to try to further deceive Jesus. In Psalm 91 God promises protection for his own. So, if Jesus was to step off the temple at height and miraculously be protected, then *¿would* he be expressing his dependence on God to save and protect?

Well, Jesus saw through the deception. Testing God and performing spectacular but unnecessary stunts are not good reasons to do something as stupid as jumping off the building. Jesus' miracles were to restore people to life and health, and to free the captives, they were not for showing off or testing God unnecessarily. Jesus again quoted the Bible, Deuteronomy 6, verse 16 - "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." He stood firm where Adam fell. He trusted his Father when Adam turned to his own ways.

When faced with our own temptations we can follow Jesus' path. Quote scripture, stand firm, and deny the temptations the opportunity to grow.

I'm not very good at memorising things and rarely do I remember a particular passage throughout the day I read it. Having said that, I rarely remember the particular food I had for lunch three days ago or dinner last week, but thanks to that food I have the energy to stand here now.

If we regularly go to the feast of Scripture and feed ourselves on God's truth we will have the sustenance to stand firm against temptation.

"But", you might say, "Jesus actually remembered the verses and quoted them in his time of temptation."

Let me point out that Jesus was filled with the Spirit. Verse one says that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and that he was led by the Spirit. Christians are filled with the same Holy Spirit, He will bring to mind Scriptures that we need at the time we need them. It may or may not be a word for word recollection but the Spirit will bring God's truth to bear in our lives.

Also, Jesus had just spent time fasting and praying. It's something He recommends we do, and you might like to try it during Lent. Jesus spent intensive time praying and focusing on God, and meditating on the Scriptures. He was away from distraction and was using the discipline of fasting showing that he was not a slave of anything except God. He said "no" to his physical appetite to ensure that his greatest appetite was for God. In John 4.34, Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me."

To stand firm when tempted we need to ensure that our greatest appetite is for God. We need to pray for this, feed ourselves on God's word regularly even if we don't remember what we read. But better still is to spend time memorising verses that are helpful during the struggles, when we are in the heat of battle.

James 4.7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." And let me remind you that as you resist temptation and stand firm with God, God is present with you. He will never let you go.

Keep trusting Jesus because he is the one who was victorious when Adam failed. Jesus is not just a model for us to follow, but it is through his sacrifice that we can be freed the burden of the law and from guilt even when we fail. When we trust Jesus we are included in His victory over sin, temptation and death. Trying to overcome temptation in our own strength is not the way. Through faith in Jesus we are now able to say "no" to temptations and live in the true joy, fulfilment and fullness of life that Jesus offers.

So, if like me, you are feeling like the paradise of this world has been lost. Don't worry, you're not alone. If you've noticed that you're part of the problem. Don't fear. In Jesus Paradise truly is Regained. He is our victory, our prize, our Paradise.