

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

FEBRUARY 21, 2010

LENT 1

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-11

PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16

ROMANS 10:8B-13

LUKE 4:1-13

Before reading this sermon, I would encourage you to read the above Scriptures carefully. Pastor Larry

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR

FATHER AND OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.

AS PASTOR JEFF WAS TAKING THE CHILDREN OUT, I WAS REMINDED OF

ANOTHER TIME WHEN A PASTOR TOOK THE CHILDREN OUT FOR

CHILDREN'S CHURCH AND THE GOSPEL STORY WAS THE SAME AS THE

ONE FOR TODAY ---- ABOUT JESUS BEING TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL. WHEN

ONE OF THE CHILDREN CAME BACK, HE WANTED TO ASK HIS MOTHER IF

THE DEVIL WAS REALLY MEAN. SHE STRUGGLED TO EXPLAIN MEAN, EVIL,

DECEITFUL, ETC. WHEN HER SON SAID "WELL, THE PASTOR SAID

TEMPTATION IS LIKE WHEN WE GO TO THE STORE AND YOU AND DAD GO

DOWN THIS ONE AISLE AND I GO DOWN THE OTHER AISLE. AND THERE IN

FRONT OF ME IS A BUNCH OF CANDY, AND A VOICE SAYS, "YOU CAN TAKE

SOME." MOM WAS TRYING TO THINK HER WAY THROUGH THIS WHEN

SHE DECIDED TO ASK HER SON, "WELL, WHEN THE VOICE SAYS "YOU CAN

TAKE SOME." WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? I'D SAY "THANK YOU."

OBVIOUSLY THERE'S STILL SOME WORK TO DO THERE.

THEN THERE WAS THAT TIME WHEN I WAS IN ELEMENTARY

SCHOOL, AND THE STORES OF OUR LITTLE TOWN WERE ALWAYS OPEN ON

FRIDAY NIGHTS IN THE SUMMER TIME. I WENT ALONE INTO THE

HARDWARE STORE AND STARED AT ALL THE DIFFERENT FISHING EQUIPMENT OUR LITTLE STORE HAD. I DIDN'T EVEN FISH YET BUT THERE WERE THESE LIME COLORED JIGS WITH LEAD AROUND THE HOOK AND LIME FEATHERY THINGS. THEY REALLY CAUGHT MY EYE. I WANTED THEM BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY TO BUY THEM. I STARED AT THEM FOR A WHILE. THEN WENT OUTSIDE TO THE STREET. WENT IN AGAIN AND LOOKED AT THEM. THEN WENT OUTSIDE TO THE STREET, EACH TIME GOING BY THE ONE AND ONLY CASHIER IN THE STORE, HARVEY LOFTSGARD WHO WAS A GOOD FRIEND OF MY DAD'S AND A MEMBER OF OUR CHURCH. **I KEPT ARGUING WITH MYSELF AS TO WHETHER OR NOT I SHOULD JUST TAKE THEM. THIS IS OFTEN THE WAY IT HAPPENS WITH TEMPTATION - THAT YOU ARGUE AND PLAY WITH THE IDEA UNTIL IT BECOMES TOO ATTRACTIVE TO RESIST.** FINALLY, I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER AND WHEN I DIDN'T THINK ANYBODY WAS LOOKING I TOOK THAT LITTLE BAG OF LIME GREEN JIGS OFF IT'S HOOK AND PUT IT IN MY PANTS AND HEADED FOR THE DOOR. NOT IN MY POCKET, BUT IN MY PANTS. (BAD MISTAKE) AS I HEADED FOR THE FRONT DOOR OF THE STORE, I FELT THE BAG OF JIGS SLIPPING DOWN MY PANTS, AND WOULDN'T YOU KNOW, RIGHT IN FRONT THE CASHIER WHERE A NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS WERE STANDING, THEY FELL OUT ONTO THE FLOOR. I DIDN'T HESITATE BUT JUST KEPT RIGHT ON WALKING. RETURNING A FEW MINUTES LATER, PEEKING INTO THE STORE FROM THE

SIDEWALK, I NOTICED THE HOOKS HAD BEEN PICKED UP. THAT FAILURE PROBABLY SAVED ME FROM A LIFE OF CRIME.

WELL IT'S ON A MUCH BIGGER SCALE, BUT HERE TODAY WE SEE JESUS STRUGGLING WITH TEMPTATIONS THAT ARE THROWN AT HIM BY THE DEVIL. IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE SAME OLD STORY, THE SAME OLD STRATEGY. **DIVIDE AND CONQUER.** GET A BOY TO STEAL CANDY OR SOME FISH HOOKS AND YOU HAVE JUST SUCCEEDED IN DIVIDING HIM FROM WHO HE WAS MEANT TO BE. (THOU SHALT NOT STEAL) IT'S SUCH AN OLD TRICK IT GOES WAY BACK TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN, WHERE THE SERPENT THERE CHALLENGES OUR FIRST PARENTS AS TO WHETHER OR NOT GOD IS TO BE TRUSTED. LOOK AT IT CLOSELY AND YOU SEE THE SERPENT SAY TO ADAM AND EVE, "DID GOD REALLY SAY.....?" IT'S A TEMPTATION TO BELIEVE GOD IS A LIAR AND NOT TO BE TRUSTED. IT'S AN ATTEMPT TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN GOD AND OUR FIRST PARENTS. THAT'S WHAT THE TEMPTATIONS ARE FOR – TO **DIVIDE AND CONQUER** AND WREAK HAVOCK WITH GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS CREATION. THROUGH OUT THE SCRIPTURES YOU CAN SEE IT COME UP TIME AND TIME AGAIN, SATAN ACTING AS SOME KIND OF ANGEL OF LIGHT, TELLING HALF TRUTHS, DECEIVING, SUGGESTING, MAKING EVIL LOOK OKAY, SUGGESTING SELFISHNESS ISN'T AS BAD AS IT MIGHT APPEAR. MAKING WRONG LOOK RIGHT AND RIGHT LOOK WRONG. EVER SINCE HE WAS CAST OUT OF HEAVEN HE HAS BEEN A POOR LOSER, AND BECAUSE HE

KNOWS HIS DAYS ARE NUMBERED, HE'LL GO TO GREAT ENDS TO DISRUPT GOD'S GOOD AND GRACIOUS PLAN.

TODAY AFTER JESUS IS COMING OFF OF THE HIGH OF HIS BAPTISM, SATAN MEETS UP WITH HIM IN THE DESERT. FROM SUCH A HIGH IN THE WATERS OF HIS BAPTISM WHERE HE WAS ANOINTED AND DECLARED THE SON OF GOD, NOW TO THIS DRY, DESERTED DESERT. FROM RIDING SO HIGH TO BEING BROUGHT SO LOW. JESUS HAS BEEN WITHOUT FOOD FOR 40 DAYS. HE IS WEAK AND VULNERABLE. WHEN WE ARE IN OUR WILDERNESSES, IN OUR SLUMPS, IN OUR MOST VULNERABLE POSITIONS, IS WHEN WE ARE MOST LIKELY TEMPTED TO DOUBT OUR IDENTITY. SO THE DEVIL KNOWS HE CAN USE THIS WILDERNESS SITUATION TO TWIST AND TURN ON JESUS A BIT. THE DEVIL COMES TO HIM WITH THE TEMPTATION THAT **"IF" HE IS THE SON OF GOD** TAKE A ROCK AND MAKE SOME BREAD OUT OF IT. WHAT COULD IT HURT? **PROVE TO ME YOU ARE WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE!** AND JESUS QUOTES SCRIPTURE BACK TO THE DEVIL, **"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE."** DEUTERONOMY 8:3 HE QUOTES MOSES WHO HAD BEEN IN THE WILDNERNESS WHEN MANNA WAS SUPPLIED FOR THE MULITITUDES. JESUS WILL LATER PROVIDE MULTITUDES WITH BREAD BUT IT WON'T BE ON THIS DAY, BECAUSE THERE IS MORE THAT GIVES LIFE THAN BREAD, **"MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."**

BUT THE DEVIL DOESN'T GIVE IN EASILY SO HE COUNTER ATTACKS WITH THE PROMISE OF GIVING JESUS THE WHOLE WORLD IF HE WILL FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP HIM. THAT WOULD SERVE IN WHAT JESUS HAD COME TO DO. GO WITH PLAN B. IT WILL BE EASIER FOR YOU, JESUS. THEN YOU CAN BE LIKE A SUPERMAN AND REALLY FIGHT FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE AND THE AMERICAN WAY. **THIS IS THAT OLD SELL YOUR SOUL TO THE DEVIL TEMPTATION.** EXCEPT ONE HAS TO WONDER, IS THE WORLD REALLY SATAN'S TO GIVE AWAY? YET ONE MORE LIE. FOR SURE IT WAS THE TEMPTATION TO AVOID THE CROSS. AND JESUS REPLIES, **“YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY SHALL YOU SERVE.”** MORE WORDS QUOTED FROM MOSES - DEUTERONOMY 6:13

BUT HE KEEPS WORKING TO DRIVE THAT WEDGE TO DIVIDE AND CONQUER. HE IS WISING UP A BIT AND KNOWS SOME SCRIPTURE OF HIS OWN, SO HE QUOTES PART OF OUR PSALM 91 TODAY WHEN HE ATTACKS THE IDENTITY OF JESUS ONE MORE TIME, AND SAYS, **“IF” YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD** THROW YOURSELF DOWN FROM A HIGH POINT AND TRUST THAT THE ANGELS WILL CATCH YOU. FOR THE BIBLE SAYS “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU, TO PROTECT YOU.” AND “ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.” AGAIN BE A KIND OF SUPERMAN - FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET, MORE POWERFUL THAN A LOCOMOTIVE, ABLE TO LEAP TALL BUILDINGS WITH A SINGLE BOUND.

BUT JESUS COMES RIGHT BACK WITH SCRIPTURE OF HIS OWN, AGAIN QUOTING MOSES, **“DO NOT PUT THE LORD, YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.”**

DEUTERONOMY 6:16

THE DEVIL DOESN'T BELIEVE IN THREE STRIKES AND YOU ARE OUT, SO HE DOES A LITTLE RENDITION OF ARNOLD'S SCHWARTZNAGER'S "I'LL BE BACK." AS HE TAKES OFF. AND HE WILL BE BACK LATER IN THE GOSPEL WHEN HE GETS JUDAS TO DO HIS DIRTY WORK.

**DIVIDE AND CONQUER!** THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. DIVIDE GOD'S PEOPLE FROM THEIR GOD. DIVIDE THE LORD JESUS FROM HIS FATHER. DIVIDE GOD'S PEOPLE FROM HIS WORD. DIVIDE GOD'S PEOPLE FROM GOD'S PEOPLE. DIVIDE GOD'S PEOPLE FROM THEIR MISSION.

WE MIGHT BE CONTENT TO BE A SOCIAL CLUB THAT JUST HAPPENS TO HAVE A CROSS ON TOP OF IT, BUT WE ARE MEANT TO BE SO MUCH MORE. SO MUCH MORE IN FACT, THAT IF IT IS A SOCIAL CLUB WE ARE CONTENT TO BE, GOD MAY JUST VERY WELL LET US DIE.

THE APOSTLE PAUL WOULD SAY THAT WHEN IT COMES TO CARRYING OUT GOD'S MISSION ON THIS EARTH, **WE ARE IN A BATTLE FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE SOULS OF PEOPLE.** LISTEN TO HIM IN HIS CONCLUSION TO THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS: (SITTING BETWEEN TWO ROMAN SOLDIERS, NOTICING THEIR UNIFORMS, HE GOT AN IMAGE OF THE CHRISTIAN) **FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS POWER. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF**

**GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL. FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST ENEMIES OF BLOOD AND FLESH, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES, AGAINST THE COSMIC POWERS OF THIS PRESENT DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES.**

**THEREFORE TAKE UP THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND ON THAT EVIL DAY, HAVING DONE EVERYTHING, TO STAND FIRM. STAND THEREFORE, AND NOW TRY TO VISUALIZE THIS) AND FASTEN THE BELT OF TRUTH AROUND YOUR WAIST, AND PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. AS SHOES FOR YOUR FEET PUT ON WHATEVER WILL MAKE YOU READY TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. WITH ALL OF THESE TAKE THE SHIELD OF FAITH, WITH WHICH YOU WILL BE ABLE TO QUENCH ALL THE FLAMING ARROWS OF THE EVIL ONE. TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD.” DID YOU NOTICE HOW JESUS DREW THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT (THE WORD OF GOD) AND PUT DOWN THE DEVIL ONE TIME AFTER ANOTHER IN THE GOSPEL THIS MORNING. IMAGINE BEING A SOLDIER IN A LIFE AND DEATH BATTLE AND YOU HAVE NO SWORD IN YOUR HAND.**

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR CURRENT WILDERNESS IS -

BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS, WAVERING FAITH, LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT, FRUSTRATING CHALLENGES AT WORK, QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, CONFUSION OVER A LIFE SITUATION, ONE TYPE OF GRIEF OR ANOTHER, **BUT KNOW YOU ARE IN A DANGEROUS PLACE WHEN YOU ARE IN ANY OF THOSE WILDERNESS SITUATIONS.**

REMEMBER THESE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL:

HEBREWS 4:15 THAT **“WE DO NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIEST WHO IS UNABLE TO SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT WE HAVE ONE WHO IN EVERY RESPECT HAS BEEN TESTED AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN.**

AND 2:18 **“BECAUSE HE HIMSELF WAS TESTED BY WHAT HE SUFFERED, HE IS ABLE TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE BEING TESTED.”**

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 – **NO TESTING HAS OVERTAKEN YOU THAT IS NOT COMMON TO EVERYONE. GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE TESTED BEYOND YOUR STRENGTH, BUT WITH THE TESTING HE WILL ALSO PROVIDE THE WAY OUT SO THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT.**

THE WAY OUT? COME TO THIS ALTAR RAIL THIS MORNING WHERE YOU WILL MEET THE SAME JESUS WHO WAS IN THAT WILDERNESS FIGHTING THE DEVIL AND HE IS HERE FOR YOU SAYING ONCE AGAIN – TAKE AND EAT, THIS IS MY BODY, GIVEN FOR YOU. TAKE AND DRINK, THIS IS MY BLOOD Poured OUT FOR YOU. THIS IS MY WORD TO YOU, FOR



YOU. THIS IS YOUR WAY OUT. YOU CAN COUNT ON IT ABOVE ALL OTHER  
WORDS. **EAT, DRINK, BELIEVE.** AMEN.