



When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day
Then go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't your father, or mother, or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the man staring back from the glass.

He's the fellow to please – never mind all the rest
For he's with you, clear to the end
And you've passed your most difficult, dangerous test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.¹

I memorized that poem almost 20 years ago and it's stuck with me ever since. There's something about it that resonates deeply with me as a man and father. I often find myself repeating the poem whenever I need to be reminded of who I am and who I want to be as a man.

Like so many others, I grew up without an engaged father in my life. My sense of self-worth and identity was found in my accomplishments, athletic success and relationships. Straight A's, varsity letters and girlfriends were how I measured my manhood. Then I met Jesus and began a life long adventure of finding my identity and self-worth in Him. If you grew up without a father or even if you had a great father, we all struggle with identity issues. Who or what do you depend on for your sense of self-worth and identity? Your education? Your career? Your level of success and prosperity? Your politics? Your marital status? The people you know and the people who know you? The books you read? The places you've traveled? Our world says that is what life

is all about; that's who you are. But God says something completely different.

As we continue our series, "Building a Home: One Room at a Time," we find ourselves in the garage looking to address fathers. Here on the Peninsula garages are not used in the same way they used to be. Garages are turned into extra bedrooms, workout facilities, and storage spaces. It's rare to see a man working on his car or building something in the garage. Maybe a "man cave" would have been a better room. Today, I want to look at two passages, two scenes of Scripture—Jesus' baptism and his testing in the wilderness. These passages do not specifically address fathers, but I do believe they speak deeply to what many men, and the rest of us, deal with. Look with me at the baptism of Jesus found in Matthew 3:16-17.

The Baptism of Jesus

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Instead of focusing on why Jesus was baptized and what he saw, I want to zero in on **who** spoke to him and **what** he said. God, the Father spoke to His Son. I have no idea what God's voice sounded like; probably like Morgan Freeman! Roughly four hundred silent years had past between the writing of the Old Testament and the appearance of John the Baptist in the New Testament. God revealed nothing new to his people during what scholars call the "intertestamental period." At Jesus' baptism God broke the silence by quoting from the Prophet Isaiah (42:1) and the Psalms (2:7). Every Jew would have recognized these words from the Hebrew Scriptures. By doing this, Jesus is identified as both the Suffering Servant and the Messianic King. Jesus is the One Israel has been waiting for.

He not only spoke but God affirmed his Son. God placed his stamp of approval on his Son and his ministry. God simply said, "I love you." The word for love used here literally means, beloved. God said, "This is my Son, my beloved, with him I am well pleased." What strikes me is God said all this **before** Jesus' ministry, before Jesus healed a single person, preached a sermon, called his disciples, calmed a storm, cast out a demon, or went to the cross. God said, You are my son, my beloved. Jesus' baptism

marks the beginning of his public ministry and God's words affirm who Jesus is and what his ministry will be.

Do you know that you are God's beloved and he is well pleased with you? Do you really believe that at your core? I think about my own kids and I love them unconditionally. Nothing they can ever do or say will change my love for them. That's how God views you, as his children. Dads, do you affirm your kids in this way often? Some of the most powerful words we can tell our children are, "I love you. I am proud of you. I'm so happy that you are my son, my daughter." Sadly, many of us live with a lingering sense that we are disappointing God. We see so many flaws and inconsistencies in our lives and wonder how God could not be disappointed with us. As a father, I am constantly being reminded of my weaknesses and mistakes. It's hard to give our children what we don't possess.

Mary Ann Bird, in her memoir, *The Whisper Test*, writes: "I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech. When schoolmates asked, 'What happened to your lip?' I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.

"There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored—Mrs. Leonard by name. She was short, round, happy—a sparkling lady.

"Annually we had a hearing test. Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back—things like "The sky is blue" or "Do you have new shoes?"

"I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, 'I wish you were my little girl.'

"God says to every person deformed by sin, 'I wish you were my son' or 'I wish you were my daughter.'"

We've all been marred by sin, yet to us who know and follow Jesus he says, "You are my son, my daughter, my beloved. With you I am well pleased." Marked with his approval, we can go out and make a difference in the world. Do you live with a deep understanding that you are beloved by God? Dads, there is nothing more important to your family than your own personal relationship with Jesus. An engaged father is one who is first engaging with the Lord daily. It's living your life out of the overflow of God's work in you. That's what your marriage needs and what your kids need. That's what our church, community and world needs, men walking with Jesus, empowered by their

"belovedness." Men, your identity is not found in what you do or how successful you are, but in who you are in Christ. As we look next at how Jesus was tempted in the desert, it's important to remember these powerful words from his Father. Jesus will rely on them.

Jesus is Tested in the Wilderness

Isn't it amazing in life how a mountain top experience, like a baptism, can quickly lead into a trial in the desert? Always be on guard after a spiritual high; it's often a ripe opportunity for spiritual attack. Look what happens to Jesus in Matthew 4:1-4:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

This passage assumes his readers believe a few things. First, Matthew describes a devil who is very real. The devil is not pictured here covered in red with a cape, pitchfork and horns. He's much more crafty than that. He approaches Jesus when he is weak from hunger after fasting for 40 days. The devil has been doing this type of thing for a long time and he knows when we are most vulnerable to temptation. I've found we fall into two errors about the devil. Either we give the devil too much credit—he's responsible for terrorism and our common cold, or we don't consider him at all. We do know that anything Satan does to us or in our world does not happen without God's knowledge or consent. Consider Job or Peter. While the devil is God's enemy, he is in no way equal in power or strength to the Lord. He's a roaring lion seeking to devour us, but he is on a lease that the Lord controls.

It's also interesting that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. Notice, the Spirit leads him but does not tempt him. The Greek word used here for temptation is the same word used for testing. To tempt can also mean to test. Knowing the difference is huge. God tests us for our good; the devil tempts us for our destruction. God tests us to reveal our character and to strengthen us. God never tempts us but often tests us. Temptation is a normal part of being a Christian. We are tempted every day. Temptation is not a sin. It's how we respond to temptation that leads to sin. It's also clear from the Scriptures that we are never to test God; we'll see that in a moment. There are three temptations we will see in this passage.

Temptation #1: Provide for yourself without God

The devil tempts Jesus with food, but it was more than that. Jesus could have easily turned stones into bread. The issue is not **could** he do it, but **should** he do it. There is nothing wrong with

using our God-given abilities to provide food for our families. The issue here is not about food, but about trust. The temptation was for Jesus to use his power to satisfy his own needs instead of trusting God to provide for him. Satan is tempting Jesus to distrust God's goodness and care. He's saying, "Why is God allowing you, of all people, to go hungry out here? If he is really good, if he really loves you, then he wouldn't allow the Son of God to starve." The temptation was to use his position in a way that God did not intend. He could have used his powers on himself, but his mission was to seek and save the lost, to use his power for the benefit of others.

Jesus deals with the first temptation like the rest by quoting from Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, "**Man shall not live on bread alone...**" Even though he was starving, he did not turn stones into bread for himself, but gave his own body as bread for people. Jesus resists Satan because to turn stones into bread would be an act of disobedience and distrust. We face the same temptation every day. What do you think you need most to live? God or food? God or marital happiness? God or a fulfilling career? Those things are all very real needs, but we should not seek them outside of a dependence on God. For fathers we face this temptation every day—the temptation to trust ourselves and not God. We are told to work hard, provide for our families, and rely heavily on ourselves. But as a man of God, we ultimately need to trust our heavenly father whom "every perfect gift" comes from. Fathers, trust God, not yourself. What do you need to trust God with today? Will you do it?

Let's look at the second temptation in verses 5–7.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Temptation #2: Test God to prove His Protection

Satan again is tempting Jesus at the core of his identity, "If you are the Son of God." He's saying, "If you are who you really say you are, then do this. Show off a little." Satan then quotes Scripture to back up his challenge. Did you know that Satan knows the Bible too? In fact he knows it better than any one of us. He knows just how to twist and conform it for his own use. We are pretty good at using Scripture to justify our sinful actions as well, aren't we? We need to be careful and not take the Bible out of context.

Jesus sees through Satan's deceit and quotes again from Deut. 8, "**Do not put the Lord your God to the test.**" Jesus could have thrown himself down and commanded angels to care for him. But, this would have forced God to act and prove his love and

care for Jesus. He didn't need to do that. He was secure in who he is as God's beloved. He didn't need to test God to prove that fact and nor should we.

Men, we do this all the time, don't we? Pretending we are acting in faith, we step out into something dumb and challenge God to act on our behalf. "God, if you really love me, then you'll work this out!" We say things like, "This is a great investment and yes there is a ton of risk, but if you got my back God then you will protect me and make it happen." That's not faith, that's presumption! That is putting God to the test. True faith is based on God's Word, not in how he should respond to us. Faith is trusting in who he is and what he has already promised. Faith has enough risk; we don't need to make stuff up! If I go skydiving, I do not expect God to protect me. I hope he does, but if I die, he's certainly not at fault. You don't need any proof of God's love or care for you. He went to the cross to prove you are his beloved child. Finally, let's look at the third temptation in verses 8–11.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Temptation #3: True power is found in what the world has to offer

The first temptation was about provision. The second temptation was about protection. The third is about power. Somehow Satan opens a curtain and shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He saw the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, Egypt, the Byzantine Empire, Europe in the Middle Ages, and well into the modern age. Can you imagine the intoxication that comes from an offer to rule over every age with power, wealth and prestige? Satan says, you can have it all just by bowing down and worshipping me. That's it. One act of worship. Just do it once. Heck, you don't even have to pretend to like it!

Think about how attractive this offer was. Jesus, by taking Satan's offer, could have prevented a history of pain, suffering and injustice. No World War II. No Rwandan massacre. No hunger, poverty or crime. Personally, for Jesus, he wouldn't even have to die a brutal death on the cross. He could have taken the easy way out, avoiding his own suffering and pain. Now that's a temptation! Jesus responds, "**Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'**"

Jesus knew something powerful about worship—you become who or what you worship. The Bible calls this idolatry. That's why the first of the Ten Commandments is, "**You shall have no**

other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). At the core of all sin is idolatry. I've talked about this before. Idolatry is always the reason we do anything wrong. Whatever you feel you must have to make you happy is usually more important to your heart than God himself. Tim Keller wrote, "Idolatry is not just a failure to obey God, it is a setting of the whole heart on something besides God." Wealth, success, happiness, relationships, careers, and families are not wrong or sinful. But, they can become idols very quickly. The only way not to become seduced by the powers of this world is to become captivated by Jesus. Worship is how we celebrate, rejoice and rest in what Jesus has done for us. Men, how are you doing at worship? Do you come to church expecting God to do something great in your life? Are you not afraid to pour out your hearts to God and sing like no one else is around? Are you more in love with Jesus and more moved by him than all that this world has to offer? Worship is not just about singing songs, it's how we fight the idols in our hearts.

The late Henri Nouwen was a popular Christian writer and Catholic priest who wrote over 40 books and whose spiritual life deeply influenced many people, including my own. In his book, *Beloved by God* he encourages the reader to recapture who they are—a person deeply loved by God. Unfortunately many people do not see themselves in this light and instead seek to be loved by other people and things. In North America especially, we define ourselves in three ways:

1. "I am what I do"
2. "I am what others say about me"
3. "I am what I have"

Jesus was tempted in the same way and shows us another way, the way of the beloved. If we are truly going to live like Jesus, if we are going to fight temptation, if we are going to endure God's tests, if we are going to be the fathers our family need, then we must recapture who we are—beloved by God. We too must hear the voice of God when he says, "This is my Son, my beloved, with him, with her, I am well pleased."

Nouwen writes, "It certainly is not easy to hear that voice in a world filled with voices that shout: 'You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless; you are despicable, you are nobody—unless you can demonstrate the opposite.' These negative voices are so

loud and so persistent that it is easy to believe them. That's the great trap. It is the trap of self-rejection. Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. We are the Beloved. We are intimately loved long before our parents, teachers, spouses, children and friends loved or wounded us. That's the truth of our lives. That's the truth I want you to claim for yourself. That's the truth spoken by the voice that says, 'You are my Beloved.'"

So again I say...

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And the world makes you king for a day
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¹ *The Man in the Glass* by Peter Dale Wimbrow Sr.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.