Temptations of Jesus—Matthew 4:1-11

1. No eyewitnesses to this story—Jesus chooses to disclose this moment of struggle and weakness.

2. Turn stone into bread, offered all the kingdoms of the world, jump from a high place to test God's promises of safety—where is the evil in these requests?

3. Why didn't Jesus just destroy the tempter?

4. The tempter asks Jesus to wear a crown but not a cross.

5. The Temptation revolved around a question: What should the Messiah look like?
   a. A people's Messiah who could turn stones into bread to feed everyone?
   b. A Torah Messiah standing tall at the lofty pinnacle of the temple?
   c. A King Messiah ruling over not just Israel but all the kingdoms of earth?

6. Jesus shows a reluctance to bend the rules on earth.

7. Satan was offering Jesus the chance to be the thundering Messiah.....anything but a suffering Messiah.

8. On the cross Jesus knew that for him to save the world, he could not save himself.

9. Jesus surrendered his greatest advantage: the power to compel belief.

The basic lesson of the Temptation

1. How do we motivate people to show compassion?

2. How do you reform people and get them to be good?

3. Goodness cannot be imposed externally, from the top down; it must grow internally from the bottom up.

4. A profound difference between God's power and Satan's power.
    a. Satan has the power to coerce, to dazzle, to force obedience, to destroy.
    b. Humans have learned much from that power: with a bullwhip or a billy club or an AK-47, humans can force other human beings to do just about anything they want.
    c. God's power is internal and noncoercive—it is committed to transform gently from the inside out and it depends wholly on human choice.
    d. God made himself weak for one purpose: to let human beings choose freely for themselves what to do with God.
    e. God will not force himself on us—God's strong insistence on human freedom is so absolute that he gives us the power to reject him and crucify him.
    f. Jesus showed an incredible respect for human freedom and thereby put God's own reputation at risk—he preserved the free will of an incredibly flawed species always stating the consequences of a choice and then throwing the decision back to the party.

What do we learn from Jesus?

1. We too lack the willpower to resist shortcut solutions to human needs.

2. Sometimes the church joins hands with a government that offer a shortcut path to power.

3. Sometimes we want to seize control and compel others to help accomplish the causes we believe in.

4. How often are we willing to trade away certain freedoms for the guarantee of safety and protection or for the chance to realize our ambitions?

Jesus' resistance against Satan's temptations preserves for us the very freedom we can use to face our own temptations.

1. What kind of Messiah are you looking for—A God who will fix social problems and relieve suffering in the world? O a God who will meet all your needs?

2. Do you ever wish Jesus would "hurry up" his work in your life?

3. Are you tempted to compromise Jesus' way to achieve what you want?