

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" 5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'" 9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11 and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 12 Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

When the first Nintendo game system came out, we bought one for our kids about a year later. We obviously enjoyed the original Mario Bros. and Duck Hunt, but as time went on there were two games in particular that were challenging that we tended to rent out from the neighborhood video rental store; "Bad Dudes" and the "Battle for Olympus". Both games were a bit of a challenge, especially for me as an adult entering the world of video games. I know I was really curious as to how each of those games ended.

A few years later books came out with "cheat codes". When we finally got a hold of one, I was really excited, NOW I'd get to see the endings of these games. Well once I used them, and did get to the end, it was a major disappointment. For all "tricks" and "levels" of the games the endings were simple and "anti-climatic." I guess those who put the games together felt that all of the challenge was in getting through the different levels rather than getting to the end. In the whole scheme of things, "cheat codes" weren't very helpful.

In the scripture passage from Luke, we find Jesus, after God has affirmed his mission in the context of his submitting to a "sinner's" baptism, in the wilderness fasting and grappling with what that means. It is obviously very intense as fasting is part of this time in "wilderness discernment" and prayer. No doubt Jesus sees before him the inevitable long hard road to the cross.

So along comes the Devil, who also knows this, and just like with Adam and Eve, provides some "short cuts" or "cheat codes" for Jesus to accomplish his mission. In reading the passage, and putting yourself in Jesus' place, they seem to really take care of the situation from hunger, power and assurance of God's care. Jesus will have none of it and the devil takes a "major setback", waiting for the right moment.

Because Jesus remained steadfast and focused, we have that ultimate assurance of life both here and in the world to come.

Now obviously none of us will have the same mission of Jesus, but we all have direction and goals God puts in our lives. Sometimes the path to get to those goals is not easy, making the goal seem far away. It is at such a time we should be aware the Devil is coming with his "cheat codes".

May we resist them and follow God's way. Someone wrote:

*"Every temptation that we meet in the path of duty is another chance of filling our souls with the power of heaven"*

Pastor John Van Haneghan