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It's not a sin to be given much – it's not a sin to have power.

What will we do with the power we have? That's what counts!

There are some cautions – some potential problems – associated with power that we should be aware of:

A. We are tempted to use power for self-serving purposes

We see this all over the place in Scripture. Pharaohs and kings – including many of Israel's own kings – and so many others as well, who use their power for their own benefit. We see this all over the place in our world today too.

B. We are tempted to compromise in order to gain more power

That seems to be a big part of what's going on in this text. Where the desire for power turns into a test – an opportunity to choose between two options.

Turning to look at the text:

⁸Again, the devil took him [that's Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

⁹“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”
Matthew 4:8-9

What the devil is really after all along is this: he wants Jesus to worship him – to be sidetracked from His mission – to be sidetracked from His life of submission to the Father – to change His allegiance.

We might wonder, could the devil have really given Jesus all the kingdoms right then and there?

Scripture on the devil:

- he is referred to as ‘the prince of this world’ throughout John’s gospel (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11);
- he’s referred to as ‘the god of this age’ in 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4:4); and
- We read in 1 John that, “...the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).

To say that satan has no power is probably an understatement.

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“[The devil] is understood to have real power in the present age, though always under the perspective of the ultimate victory of God. And as such he can offer power and glory, but not ultimate fulfillment, still less an authority in accordance with the will of God”².

Could satan have really given Jesus all the kingdoms right then and there? We’re not totally sure; but it is a pretty enticing offer.

Jesus wants the kingdoms. One day, as the book of Revelation tells us, voices in heaven will declare:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.”
Revelation 11:15b

The temptation of the devil here is to take the shortcut.

Here’s how I’ll sum it up:

This temptation of the devil is to gain power... now! To gain power... the easy way!

In our day-to-day lives, what might this temptation look like?

Maybe it’s the temptation to bend the truth a little bit so that we’ll be perceived a little more favourably in the eyes of our boss or others whom we respect and admire.

Maybe it’s the temptation, when in the middle of an argument, to use our words to tear down that other person – whether that’s our spouse or someone else – to ensure we come out of this as the person who is ‘right.’

Maybe it’s the temptation to yell at or speak unkindly to our kids – it’s the only thing that ‘sort of’ works – yeah, that’ll show them who’s boss.

There is a sense in which grasping for power... a sense in which taking the shortcut to get what we want... is an act aligning ourselves with what the devil would want us to do.

II. The Way Through: Allegiance to God

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “**Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’**”
Matthew 4:10

satan says, ‘worship me’... Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy, “Worship the Lord...”

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That word worship is the Greek word προσκυνέω (proskuneo)- “to express by attitude and possibly by position one’s *allegiance* to and regard for deity” (emphasis added).¹

Worship means allegiance.

“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

John 5:19b

Jesus’ allegiance is to His Father.

This text in Deuteronomy helps us see what shape allegiance to the Lord might take:

¹³ *Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.*

¹⁴ *Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you;*
Deuteronomy 6:13-14

A. Allegiance to God looks like allegiance to no one else

It looks like *not following* the other gods. Not *following* anyone else. For the people of Israel, that meant *not giving* their allegiance to the gods of the other nations.

For Jesus in Matthew 4, that meant *not giving over* His allegiance to the devil and his lies.

Quick note: to follow other gods is to follow satan!

See, if the devil is the ‘father of lies,’ the one who lies to us about who God is and about what matters most, he’ll try to get us to believe that other gods – including the ‘gods’ of our world today – are worth following over the One True God.

I think we discover another layer of what allegiance to God looks like a couple verses later in Deuteronomy 6:17:

¹⁷ *Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you.*

B. Allegiance to God looks like allegiance to His way of doing things

Yes, allegiance to God will look like obedience. Following His commands. Living in a way that’s lined up with God and His ways.

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Something really key in the context of this whole conversation about power... is that the Scriptures reveal to us – especially if we read them through the lens of Jesus and the gospel – that God’s way is the way of peace, not the way of violence and force.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.”*

Matthew 5:9

The Palm Sunday story is one that reveals a lot about God’s way of doing things in terms of power and kingdom advance:

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,

²saying to them, *“Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her.*

Untie them and bring them to me.

³*If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”*

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

Matthew 21:1-5

The donkey – that’s an image of gentleness, of meekness and of humility. It says that Jesus hasn’t come to take power through force and violence. As we’ll see on Good Friday, He is crowned as king as He allows the powerful and the violent to do their worst to him.

After his subsequent resurrection, Jesus will say this:

“...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Matthew 28:18b

Jesus only gets all that through the cross and resurrection. He only gets that through suffering love.

He only gets that through saying ‘no’ to the shortcut, ‘no’ to power the easy way - through choosing allegiance to His Father instead. Allegiance which takes the shape of doing things the Father’s way – the way of peace. Rather than the way of violence and force - rather than the way of quickly grasping for power.

So, let me ask: Where might you be tempted to use violence or force to grasp for power?

Ok, maybe not physical violence; but are you ever

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tempted to do emotional violence toward others with your words? To manipulate others to get what you want? Where does this temptation show up in your life?

To follow Jesus and not the devil is to follow Jesus' way. His way which rejects the quick, 'let me grab what I want right now' approach. His way which says, 'become little.' His way which says, 'take the posture of a humble servant.' His way which says, 'blessed are the peacemakers.' His way which says, I think, 'play the long game.'

III. Being God's Child: Submission

We've been saying throughout this series that the way in which Jesus – the Son of God – responds to each of these tests shows us something about what it means to be God's child.

When Jesus says, "*it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'*"... He's saying His allegiance is to His Father. He's also saying that He's submitted to the will of His Father.

As those who are made children of God through faith in the Son of God and what He's done for us, our posture to our Heavenly Father is to be one of willing submission.

James 4:7 instructs us in this way:

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

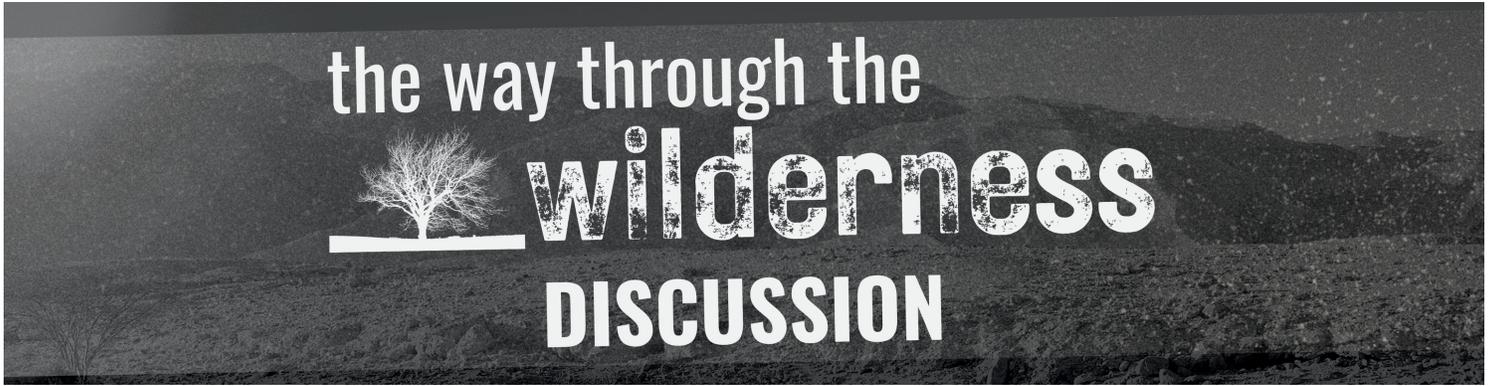
James 4:7

Our submission to our Father is a submission to a good Father who loves us and has our best interests at heart.

⁹"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Matthew 7:9-11

May we be a people who trust in Him. May we be a people who are submitted to Him and His will, believing that He's a good Father who is ultimately working out all things for good.



Open Up

1. When you hear the word 'power,' what comes to mind? Do you tend to see power as positive, negative or neutral?

2. What are some subtle ways you see people seeking power or influence in everyday life?

Read Matthew 4:8-11

1. What are some things that first stand out to you in this text?
2. In the message, we looked at this temptation as one where Jesus is tempted to gain power the 'easy way.' What are some examples you can think of in our world today where people are tempted to grasp for power in a way that is easy and painless?
3. What are some ways that you are sometimes tempted to compromise your integrity or your values in order to gain power?
4. When you think about 'worshipping the devil,' what first comes to your mind? Have you ever thought that choosing the 'easy way' could potentially be an act of giving in to what the devil would want for us? What are some other ways in which the devil might subtly be at work trying to sway us away from God?
5. In the message, we looked at worship as 'allegiance.' What does that idea change about how you think of worship? What are some 'modern-day idols' that compete for our allegiance today? What competes for your allegiance?
6. Why is submitting to and following God's way (the way of peace, humility, and self-sacrificial love) often so much difficult? How might God be challenging you in that in this current season of your life?

Prayer:

Take some time to share prayer requests and pray for each other. Pray for eyes to see God as a good Father who has our best interests at heart – and hearts that are willing to submit to Him and trust in Him.