

God's Agent of Victory

[Announce Text] Please Open your Bibles to Luke 4: 1-13. [Page 859](#)

[Scripture Introduction] Good morning, my name is Brett Sweet and I'm one of the pastors here at Grace Christian Fellowship where we exist to glorify God through gospel-centered worship, evangelism, discipleship, and community. We are continuing our series through the book of Luke and come to an incredibly impactful passage.

[Prayer for illumination] Please pray with me...

[Illustration] Last week's text ended with Adam as the universal father of mankind. There was a time when Adam was God's agent representing mankind. Picture it: You are in an exceedingly comfortable place. Temperature so ideal that you don't need clothes which is fine because sin has not yet brought shame. Food everywhere- it's like you are living at the Mall food court- only healthier and more delicious. You have your favorite person next to you, Eve, your helpful and encouraging spouse. So much support. You are God's agent and you are representing mankind well. But one day, Satan comes along in the form of a serpent and tempts you to eat fruit from the one tree that is off limits. You have lots to eat. You are comfortable. Of course you'll reject Satan's temptation. But you listen. "God has withheld this fruit from you. He won't provide for you even though you have this beautiful home and all this other food." Satan uses other words, but he is asking a question: "Who really provides?" And so you ask yourself: Who really provides? And you aren't interested in listening to what God has said. So you answer the question of who provides with, "Not God, Satan." Satan provides the really good stuff. And so you. Adam. God's agent. Fail. But the conversation continues. Satan tells you that if you eat of the fruit you will have the power of God by knowing what God knows. He is forcing you to ask the question, "Who really grants power?" And you listen and you believe that God has withheld power from you. Power that should be yours. So you ask yourself: "Who really grants power?" And you aren't interested in listening to what God has said so you answer the question, "Who really grants power?" with the answer, "Not God, Satan." So you eat. You. Adam. God's agent. Fail. Now you recognize your problem. Death is the consequence. And God is the One who will ultimately bring it. But you are Adam, God's agent, and you realize that you need

protection. So now you ask yourself, “Who really protects?” And Satan is nowhere to be found. So you answer the question, “Who really protects?” And you must answer, “Not God, ourselves. We must protect ourselves.” So you hide and you sew fig leaves together to cover your shame. Now your offspring are guilty and corrupt. Bent toward sin. Failures and sinners like their father. You, Adam, are God’s agent and you failed.

Now let’s fast forward thousands of years. And you are God’s people Israel. You are God’s agent to the world. Showing the world what God is like. And representing all of humanity as a kingdom of priests. Meant to function as the perfect God-honoring society. God has delivered you out of slavery and He’s leading you to a promised land with numerous parallels to the Garden of Eden. On the way it’s not so comfortable. You have nothing to eat. And God seems so far away. So you reminisce. You, Israel, God’s agent, were in slavery. But you had fish. You had cucumbers. You had leeks, onions, and garlic. And you, God’s agent, ask yourself the same question Adam asked, “Who really provides?” And you aren’t interested in listening to what God has said, so you answer the question, “Who really provides?” with the answer, “Not God, Egypt. There’s political and economic stability there.” So you complain against God. So you, God’s agent fail. But things are looking up. Your leader Moses is headed up a mountain to meet with God and hear from Him. But now days and weeks have passed. Moses is gone for 40 days. And you are feeling weak. You are feeling alone. You are feeling powerless. So you, God’s agent, ask yourself a question: “Who really grants power?” And you think about the nations around you. You think about your time in Egypt. And you aren’t interested in listening to what God has said so you answer the question “Who really grants power?” with the answer “Not God, idols.” So you have Aaron the high priest make a golden calf for you while Moses is gone for 40 days. So you, Israel, God’s agent, fail. But while you were asking the question of power, you recognized that you are going into hostile territory, against trained warriors. You want someone to go before you. So you, Israel, God’s agent ask yourself another question during these 40 days, “Who really protects?” And you look around. You are just former slaves. And you can’t see God. And you aren’t interested in listening to what God has said so you answer the question, “Who really protects?” with the same answer, “Not God, idols.” And you, Israel, God’s agent. Fail.

We are now ready to make sense of Luke 4:1-13 where we see Jesus, God's Son. God's agent. And when we think about those two failures. And our own failures. We will come away with this passage wanting to

[Proposition] Admire Jesus- God's agent of victory.

Jesus is going to prove Himself to be the true and better Adam. Jesus is going to prove Himself to be the true and better Israel. Jesus is not going to fail as God's agent. He is listening to what God has said and He is God's agent of victory. To see this, we are going to listen as Jesus provides answers to Satan's questions of temptation. Question 1: Who really provides? Question 2: Who really grants power? Question 3: Who really protects? I know you are anxious to get into the text, so let's get there.

[Question 1] Who really provides?

Let's read vv. 1-3

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

So the devil asks Jesus, "Who really provides?" You are hungry. Poor you. Take matters into your own hand since your supposed Father isn't providing for you. But let's listen to Jesus' answer in v. 4 where He quotes part of Deuteronomy 8:3

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

Now that verse if read to the end says,

"...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

Jesus, God's agent of victory cares what God has said. So He answers the question, "Who really provides?" with the answer, "God, who speaks." Who really provides for you this morning? God, who speaks. God who speaks. See, Jesus knows that God speaks through His Word. He ignores the attack on His identity as the Son of God. He ignores His own hunger because He is here to do things God

the Father's way. He's here to bring victory where all others fail. He passes the first test.

[Application] Jesus is dedicated to God's mission. This means He does things God the Father's way. He is empowered by the Spirit and that means He submits to God's Word. People who claim that the Holy Spirit told them to disobey this or that command from God are not filled with the Holy Spirit. To sleep with someone who isn't their spouse. To steal the company's time and office supplies. To cheat on the test. All those are efforts to provide pleasure or assets or grades in a way that God commands you not. God will provide in His own way. Listen to Him speak through God's Word you will see Him provide for His people again and again and again. Listen to Him speak. Memorize His words and promises. Jesus knew this and He was and is victorious! Admire Him!

Admire Jesus- God's agent of victory. He succeeded where all other agents fail. He answered question #1 the right way. "Who really provides?" Answer: "God, who speaks." Now let's continue watching and listening to this showdown between Satan and God's agent. Satan tempts Jesus by asking

[Question #2] Who really grants power?

Read vv. 5-7 with me

And the devil took him (Jesus) up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

Probably in some sort of vision Satan becomes the ultimate game show host. He emphasizes "To you, Jesus. To YOU! This can all be yours if the price is right!" Or rather, if you pay the right price. Jesus is being forced to ask, "Who really grants power?" Let's listen to His response in v. 8

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."

Jesus again quotes the book of Deuteronomy. Chapter 6:13. Jesus again is interested in what God says. When He is asked "Who really grants power?" Jesus answers, "God, who rules." God who rules. Since God rules over all things this

means that God alone should receive worship. Nothing else created. Not a bank account. Not a clean bill of health. Not prince or princess charming. Certainly not a pastor or church.

You see, Satan oversells himself. He doesn't have that sort of power. And what's remarkable is that Jesus has been promised in the Old Testament (Daniel 7) to receive all the authority and glory of the nations. But Jesus, God's agent of victory, knows that it can only come one way. Not Satan's way. Not the easy way. But through a toilsome, painful, exhausting ministry that must go through the cross. Jesus is willing to do the hard thing if it's the right thing. Jesus, God's agent of victory, succeeds where all other agents fail.

[Gospel] We talk a lot about how when Jesus went to the cross He did so as a substitute. For every single individual who trusts Him. To pay the penalty for our sins. That turning from our sins to Jesus in faith brings eternal life. Brings us into a living relationship with God. But there are other true motifs that flow out of the Jesus being our substitute on the cross. One of them is called, in Latin, "*Christus Victor*" or in English, "Christ the Victor." Through His life- especially moments like these verses. And through His death and resurrection Jesus defeated the evil powers that oppose God and rescued people from Satan. Now, if we need to be rescued from Satan, that tells us a very hard truth: apart from Christ, we are following Satan. Not necessarily possessed. But willfully enslaved to Satan and his ways. Unable to free ourselves. And that's just what the Bible teaches!

Ephesians 2:1-2

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-

If you are not a Christian seek God today to make you alive. If you are following the Devil you will go where he goes. And Hell is prepared for him. Trust in Christ the Victor! Trust in Jesus- God's agent of victory. And take heart in what the Apostle John tells us in 1 John 3:8

Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Hallelujah! Admire Jesus this morning! Admire the One who succeeds where all other agents fail! Follow Him this morning and this week and for the rest of your life!

[Application] Jesus went through the Cross. Jesus has defeated the Devil. And that's why the God who rules gives Jesus the authority and glory that Satan the liar promised to Jesus. Jesus knows who really grants power. Nobody except the One true God, who rules.

Notice the importance of worshipping that God. We are all worshipping something. You are looking to something to provide meaning to your life. You are looking to something that will make all your problems go away. Usually it's a good thing. Getting sober. Having money. Getting a car that runs, a better job, spouse or children. Satan wants us to worship anything except God. Jesus knows this. You worshipped yourself into your problems by worshipping the wrong things, you can only get out by worshipping the One True God. And the end of Luke's gospel proves that that includes worshipping Jesus- God's agent of victory.

Admire Jesus- God's agent of victory. He succeeds where all else fail. He answers question #1 "Who really provides?" With the answer, "God, who speaks." He answers question #2 "Who really grants power?" With the answer, "God, who rules." Now let's see Satan continue his temptation of God's agent with

[Question #3] Who really protects?

Let's read vv. 9-11

And he (Satan) took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

Satan preaches the prosperity gospel brothers and sisters. He says that if you are really God's child then nothing difficult will come your way. You won't even stub your toe. Satan has upped his game here. He has brought Scripture with him. And he's either showing Jesus some sort of vision or literally taking him to the Temple. Maybe he took him to the royal porch of the temple in the southeast corner which is situated on a cliff that would equate to a 450 foot fall. Satan says, "Listen, you are at God's house. God is right here. The fall is long. God will have lots of

time to catch you. God's Word even says He'll do that!" He asks Jesus, by twisting Scripture, that same question Adam and Israel and we have to ask. "Who really protects?" Let's listen to God's agent of victory as He answers in v. 12

And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. He's interested in what God has to say. "Who really protects, Jesus?" And God's agent of victory answers, "God, who won't be manipulated." God, who won't be manipulated. That's who protects.

So many of us follow the bad example of Israel. Which is the example of human religion. If we do certain things: Pray. Preach. Go to a worship service. Help the poor. Teach our children the Bible. We can manipulate and control God to do things the way we want. Make our lives easier. Make our churches grow. Make our children become Christians. God uses means. But He will not be manipulated. You cannot control Him. He is sovereign to do all the good He pleases in the way He pleases. Manmade religion is always about manipulating God. Jesus knows better. He's not going to try to manipulate God to perform a miracle when God simply requires obedience in the situation.

Some people are master manipulators. They can make people feel guilty or dirty or dangerous until that person caves to their desires. But God will not be manipulated. Jesus- God's agent of victory- knows this. We must learn it too. God does not exist for our purposes and plans, we exist for His purposes and plans. So we obey, like Jesus.

[Apologetic] This story is remarkable. Adam had the whole deck stacked in his favor, full of food and comfort and he failed as God's agent. Israel was in a more challenging position, but they had help from one another to remind each other to obey. Jesus is here. Against the devil. Playing at a severe disadvantage. And He is God's agent of victory over the devil.

But some of you are thinking..."A devil? Really? Seems like a fairy tale. Is he red? Does he carry a pitch fork?" God's Word does not lie. Satan and demons are real. And the vast majority of the cultures know this. They see this. Do you really know better than God's Word? Are you really so sure that you know better than thousands of reasonable, sane people who have had demonic interactions? There

are people in this room who have stories that might make you think twice. More importantly, you have to deal with Jesus. The most likely way this would be included in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is if Jesus told someone this happened. There weren't any witnesses. So Jesus is just a hallucinating liar. Or you can say that Jesus is a horrible judge of character and He recruited liars to be His closest followers. But if He's a bad judge of character, then we shouldn't listen to all the wonderful things He says that make up good character- like love, forgiveness, caring for the outcast. The devil is real and this passage proves it. More importantly it proves that Jesus is God's agent of victory over the devil.

[Application] If the devil and demons like him are real. What do we do? We admire Jesus God's agent of victory! We look to Him for power. We put on the armor of God. We arm ourselves with Scripture- we are interested in listening to what God has said. About who provides. About who grants power. And about who protects. We seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But we never trust in ourselves- we spend our time admiring Jesus and what He's done as God's agent of victory. Succeeding where we have failed. Everyone failed. Adam failed! Israel failed! David failed! Peter failed! Washington failed! Reagan failed! Gandhi failed! I failed. You failed. The 107 billion people who have ever lived on earth- failed. But Jesus was victorious! How can we not admire Jesus- God's agent of victory?

[Conclusion] I shared this several years ago, but one of my favorite movies is the movie *the Ghost and the Darkness*. It tells the mostly true story of British Lieutenant-Colonel John Henry Patterson played by Val Kilmer. He's commissioned to oversee the construction of a railway bridge across the River Tsavo in Uganda. When he arrives, there is a lion attack on a member of the construction crew and, feeling the need to lead and save his workers, he agrees to try to hunt and kill the lion. But a young medical worker named Angus Starling wants to go with him at night. Patterson asks him, "Have you ever hunted?" Starling answers, "No." The next question follows, "Can you keep quiet?" Cut to the next scene and the two men are sitting in a tree in the dark waiting for the lion to attack this goat or donkey they have chained up as bait. And Starling is complaining about how unbearable the cramp in his leg is. He wants to go back to camp and sleep. Patterson tells him to quiet down and that he must stay in the tree- Starling will never make it back to camp in the dark- the lion will eat him. So Starling falls asleep in the tree. Then the lion shows up. Patterson fires. The

gunshot startles Starling who falls through the branches and lands face to face with the lion's teeth and claws. He jumps back screaming. Terrified. Only to realize the lion was killed with one shot. Then, the next morning, the lion is strung on a pole and carried through camp and everyone involved with the railroad celebrates its death, their safety, and the victory achieved. And marching along with Patterson next to the lion, with his head held high and his rifle over his shoulder is Starling- glorying over the part he played in the victory. Just what was it that Starling did that led to the lion's death? His knowledge of African Big Game? His marksmanship? He had two tasks: sit quietly and stay in the tree. He failed them both. He loudly complained and fell out of the tree. When faced with the beast he recoiled in fear. At best, he contributed nothing. And yet he marched alongside the true victor in a place of honor. Jesus is God's agent of victory. He's the one who deserves admiration. And as we march this life of temptation along admiring Jesus- His victory becomes ours.