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Christ the Rock Lutheran Church  
Farmington, New Mexico

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup> “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

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

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. -- *Matthew 4:8-11*

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**“Christ Is Our Strength When Tempted to ‘Have It All’”**

Fellow Redeemed, Saints of the Lord Jesus Christ,

500 years ago, the Roman Catholic Church in Spain decided to cleanse the country of all non-catholics. The campaign, which primarily targeted Protestant Christians, Jews and Muslims, became known as the Spanish Inquisition. The inquisitors - we would call them torturers - invented a diabolically cruel instrument which was called the Virgin’s Kiss. It was a life size statue of a woman which unsuspecting prisoners were made to kiss. When they did so, the kiss triggered the statue’s arms, arms that were lined with sharp daggers that would embrace and pierce the victims.

In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul described how some people bring a similarly horrible end on themselves. He wrote, ***“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs”*** (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

It was exactly that kind of end that Satan desired to bring on our Lord Jesus in his third attack on Him in the Jordanian wilderness. It is, once again, a temptation with which most of us are quite familiar. I call it

**“The Temptation to Have It All.”**

**I. Satan offers his best**

Two set-backs didn’t stop Satan. Twice Christ had sent him reeling with sharp replies to Satan’s temptations from the Word of God. It was with that sword of the Spirit that the Savior parried first Satan’s attack on his physical hunger and then on His pride, His ego. Now Satan thrusts at the heart of Christ, at His affections. He offers Jesus his very best: the world and all its power and glory. In a moment of time Satan shows Jesus the greatest kingdoms this world has ever known. What a dazzling sight that must have been. The Scripture says Satan showed Jesus ***“all”***

the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. Whether that means all the kingdoms then in existence, or all the great kingdoms up to that point in time, isn't clear. Assuming it was just those of that time period, they would include the Roman Empire, which was at the pinnacle of its power, and the kingdoms of China, India and the great Mayan empire of South America. Having paraded their wealth and power before Jesus, Satan magnanimously declares, ***“All this I will give you,” ... “if you will bow down and worship me”*** (v.9). “Jesus, you came to win the world. Well, here it is, all yours just for the asking.”

The Gospel account written by Luke expands on the offer Satan made with these words: ***“And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours”*** (Lk.4:6-7). Did you catch that? Satan actually considers himself the ruler of the entire world! What arrogance! This is not Satan's world; it is God's world — created by God and sustained and preserved by God. Never did God transfer ownership of this world to Satan, not even after mankind's fall into sin. ***“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it”*** declares Psalm 24 (v.1). We call one who claims power and authority that is not theirs a *usurper*. Such a one is like the cattle rustler who re-brands a steer he has stolen, and then claims that animal is now rightfully his.

Added to the lie that Satan owns the world is his claim to be able to give all this power and glory to Christ. He implies that Jesus can become the great Messiah-King by one little act of worship. Why should He go the hard way, the way of suffering and death? It reminds us of Satan's lie to Eve: “Eat of the fruit and you will be like God.” We know, of course the sad result that came when she acted on Satan's lie. Instead of receiving the power which he promised, Adam and Eve became his slaves. This is the sad truth which everyone learns who bows before the riches and pleasures of the world, giving these things first place in their hearts. Satan's temptations offer much, but in the end they deliver little — only sin, misery and eternal death, for Satan is the master of vain hopes and empty promises. He is the “father of lies,” as Jesus called him (Jn.8:44).

## II. The trap many fall into

A closer examination of this temptation to “have it all” reveals that it really has little to do with kingdoms, their wealth and power. What is really at stake here is the affection of one's heart. All that Satan offers in the way of money or material things, in popularity or power or security are arrows aimed at the loyalty of our hearts. This comes out clearly in Satan's offer to Jesus: ***“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me”*** (v.9). The Greek word for this kind of worship means to bow down and kiss the hand. Think of that! He who the angels worship, the One of whom it is written that at His name ***“every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,”*** (Phil.2:10) is told by the devil to fall down and worship him! You see, all those kingdoms and their glory, they mean nothing to Satan. What he wants is the honor and glory that rightfully belongs only to God. And it isn't enough for him just to get people NOT to worship God; Satan desires that their hearts should belong to him! He wants it all!

No one knows better than Satan the truth of the Scripture passage, ***“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”*** (Mt.6:21), which means, that to which you assign great value will also lay claim to your heart's affection.

There is a humorous story of a young man who was proposing to his girl friend as they sat beside a beautiful lake. “Honey,” he began, “I want you to know that I love you more than anything else in the world. I want you to marry me. I know I’m not wealthy, I don’t have a yacht or a Rolls Royce or a summer home like Johnny Green, but I do love you with all my heart.” She thought for a moment and then replied, “I love you too, -- but tell me more about Johnny Green.”

That young lady had a divided heart. She was something like the promising young pastor who accompanied St. Paul on his last missionary journey. Later Paul wrote to Timothy about this young man and sadly reported, **“Demas has deserted me, having loved this present world more”** (2 Tim. 4:10). Satan got to Demas through that which he valued more than his relationship with God, through worldly treasure.

And Satan can get to us, too. No, he doesn’t come offering the kingdoms of the world, but comes with the lie that we must always have more in order to really be happy in life. He lights the flame of discontent and greed within us, and then he blows on that flame until it becomes a great fire. The Bible says, **“In vain your rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain”** (Ps. 127:1-2). In short, if the Lord’s not in it, it’s not worth a hoot.

Still, Satan comes with the lie, the lie that you can compromise just a little and get what you want. “So what if the one you have fallen in love with isn’t a Christian. He or she is the one you want. Why let a little thing like religion get in the way?” You see, it isn’t just money and riches. Time, goals, careers, friends, recreational activities — Satan can use any or all of these things to draw our hearts away from the Lord and from His Word. I have a pastor friend who used to refer to motor-homes and camping trailers as “devil wagons” because they took so many of his church members away on weekends. And some of those couples and their children did, over the course of time, leave the church, choosing their recreational activity to be more important. The point is that even the best things in life can become deadly traps when they become so important that even the Lord must take second or third or tenth place behind them all.

### **III. In Christ we already “have it all”**

The real truth here — that which Satan doesn’t want anyone to know — is that in Christ Jesus we already “have it all.” We have it all because Jesus resisted the temptations Satan set before Him.

If Jesus would have bowed before Satan, He would have legitimized Satan’s claim to the rulership of this world. But Jesus came specifically to reclaim God’s creation from its slavery to sin and to Satan. He came to establish the Kingdom of God, not in the great capitols of the world, but in the hearts of people. The price of this redemption was the cross, the path of obedience, suffering and death. Through the cross of Jesus, God would make it plain that He ruled, that He loved the world, and that He wanted those whom He had once made “in His image” to be restored to that perfection.

By surrendering all to God, Christ would lay claim to all. Through the sacrifice of His own Son, God forgave every sinner. Through the death of Jesus, Satan’s power would be destroyed, and by

His resurrection, Jesus would be proclaimed, as He rightfully is, Lord of all lords, King of all kings, Savior of the world! Not by the road of compromise, but by the hard path of pain and rejection, of obedience and love for His Father, Christ would accomplish all this for us.

Therefore, St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians these words that we need to remember: ***“All things are yours, whether ...the world or life or death or the present or the future— all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God”*** (1 Cor.3:21-22). When you understand that in Christ God has already made us rich ... in Christ given us a great future ... in Christ made us happy, blessed, secure, valued, loved ... when we know this, believe this, there will be a conversion of our heart's affection. Our hearts will belong to God, and we can rebuke the forces of evil, saying, “There is nothing you can offer me that I don't already have and more in Christ Jesus, my Lord and my God!”

Amen.

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