

**Luke 4:1-13**

February 25, 2007 – 1<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

*How do you spell...?*

Victory!

- ✠ **W**orthy Champion (v.1)
- ✠ **O**utstanding Wisdom (vv.2-4)
- ✠ **R**ighteous worship (vv.5-8)
- ✠ **D**edicated trust (vv.9-13)

In the name of Jesus, our **Worthy Champion**, dearly redeemed followers of God's beloved Son:

Whenever I hear, "V-i-c-t-o-r-y," I remember, "our Wildcats victory cry," from basketball cheering in high school. Maybe we couldn't win every game, but at least we learned how to spell. And yet, as with everything we humans want, it always seems to depend on our own intelligence and skill, strength and timing. Such things have led to many athletic championships – most of them forgotten, mansions and castles crumbling in the dust, countless wars of violence and destruction, heartache and heartbreak, lives broken down hard by sin. That's why it should not surprise us that God spells **Victory** much differently than we do. For God, it's always **W-O-R-D** – where the first letter reminds us of our...

### ✠ **W**orthy Champion (v.1)

The Holy Spirit inspired Dr. Luke to write an orderly account of positive, compelling details about our **Worthy Champion**. He never tried to get His name in the news, but God surely put Him in the spotlight by sending His cousin John the Baptizer to prepare the way before Him. John was born of aged parents Zechariah and Elizabeth. But our **Worthy Champion** was born of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin womb of Mary. No one had room for Him in Bethlehem, except among the sheep and cattle in the stable. Few could see Him as a **Worthy Champion** except the shepherds who heard the angels sing God's *Glory in the Highest* that night so long ago. For thirty years He walked this earth while ancient believers kept hoping for Him to come. Finally when it was God's time to tell the world, in the Jordan River where John was baptizing, the Holy Spirit came down on Him in the form of a dove and the Father gave His proud approval: "*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*" (Luke 3:22)

A **Worthy Champion** requires a hero's lineage. The blood line of this **Champion** reached all the way back to King David and beyond to Adam the father of the human race in the beginning. How could anyone doubt that this **Champion** is **Worthy** when such careful history is kept of His heritage?

A **Worthy Champion** calls for hard practice against stiff competition. But our **Champion** was so far beyond **Worthy** that the holy writer tells us, "*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.*" Screaming sports fans really don't have a clue what it's like out there. Hand the loudest a basketball and tell him to dunk it, but he can't. Champions make it look easy. Yet this contest was not easy; everything depended on Christ winning. For us it was a matter of life and death. Human strength could never prevail, only...

### ✠ **O**utstanding Wisdom (vv.2-4)

Always expect the devil to play dirty. All the rules he will try to bend and break. He wanted us in hell. So from hell's point of view, Jesus had to lose at any cost. Take your longest, hardest series of unfortunate events and none will come close to the trauma of Jesus in this running battle with Satan that lasted forty days. Remember Jesus is truly human with every weakness except sin. Near the end of the forty days when Jesus was so hungry from not eating anything, the roaring lion from hell attacked. The Bible tells us, "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7) Jesus shows us how.

If you've ever sharpened a knife, you know that the edge must be ground very fine, but you're still not finished. Steel tends to curl at the edge. That's why another piece of steel is used to hone the edge, to straighten out that curl so that the narrowest line of steel clears the way for the rest of the blade. With God's **Outstanding Wisdom** you can see how Satan hones his message down to a two-letter word, "If..." The devil said to Jesus, "***If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.***"

That's like someone saying, "If you have a license, speed down the highway." You don't break the law to prove you can drive. Jesus did not need to break faith with His Father to prove He is *the Son of God*. So He answers Satan's wooden chopsticks with the double edged sword of the Spirit, which is the **W-O-R-D** of God. **Outstanding Wisdom** replies, "***It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'***" (Matthew 4:4) How foolish we sinners are to think some impossible situation requires us to sin in order to solve it. How impatient in temptation to think we must use our own power to prevail. God's **Outstanding Wisdom** is not just a good example. Christ is our Savior from sins of impatience. By His **Outstanding Wisdom** Jesus teaches us, in fact, gives us...

### ‡ **R**ighteous worship (vv.5-8)

Get-rich quick schemes are nothing new, otherwise, state lotteries would not work. And maintenance crews in casinos would not find such filthy carpet by the slot machines where some patrons are too busy trying to win to stop and go the bathroom in the bathroom. No matter how much money someone has, he always wants more. But money makes a very poor idol. It cannot even guard itself.

It's hard to imagine Jesus being tempted by the "*splendor*" of kingdoms Satan showed Him from "*a very high mountain*" (Matthew 4:8). But there was much more in this temptation than money or power. Satan offered "*authority*" to use power for **Victory** and maybe some sinful pleasures with freedom from pain. Just think what Jesus could have accomplished if He had not just been a carpenter's son who never traveled more than a 100 miles from His hometown. He could have had it all – on His knees to Satan.

Then every last one of us would have gone to hell. When your money is your god, or your love life, or popularity, or job or sports or hobbies – whatever has your heart, that is your god. And no other god can save the soul from hell. Satan knew it. So did Jesus. Thank God our Lord and Savior answered, "***It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'***" That double edged sword of the Spirit, "***It is written,***" slashes all our sorry excuses for loving things and people more than **Righteous worship**. And this holy **W-O-R-D** of God who took on human flesh and blood is our sanctuary from sin for...

### ‡ **D**edicated trust (vv.9-13)

Jesus' trials were just beginning. After He finished with Satan in the desert, He would have to keep trusting in God our Father for strength against every attack of the roaring lion from hell. The third and final temptation in Luke's account holds quite a lesson for us. Satan cannot be everywhere at once. He is not omnipresent like God. But we never know when or where he will come roaring out of the thickets of human confusion. This time he charges at Jesus right out of the Bible. When someone tells you, "This is what God says...", or "God spoke to me," you have to remember that "***Satan... masquerades as an angel of light.***" (2 Corinthians 11:14 NIV) Just because someone can quote the Bible does not mean he's saying what the Bible says. "Throw yourself down from the highest point of the temple to prove you trust in God," is like every other temptation of Satan – short on truth, long on lie. Jesus fights this misuse of Scripture with the truth of God's Word. ***Jesus answered, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'***" Jesus would not tempt the Lord in order to prove His **Dedicated trust**.

Jesus is God with all the qualities of God, including omnipotence. Jesus could have used His almighty power to destroy Satan instantly. Instead our **Worthy Champion** with **Outstanding Wisdom** grants us **Righteous worship** and **Dedicated trust** because He knows how to spell **Victory: W-O-R-D**. God has placed this sharp, double edged sword in our hands too. Use it against Satan in all his opportunistic attacks, and you will triumph with Jesus every time. **W-O-R-D** spells **Victory!** Amen.