

Read Matthew 4:1-11 before reading the sermon. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Many years ago there was an actor named Flip Wilson. He did a skit which made popular the quote “The devil made me do it.”¹ The skit was about a pastor’s wife, who explains to her angry husband why she has an expensive new dress by telling him “the devil made me buy it.” She describes how the devil followed her on the street, flattered her with praise, showed her the dress in a shop window, pressed her into the shop, and then forced her to sign the pastor’s name to a check. The pastor believes she is too quick to blame the devil, but she counters by saying that, other times, the devil has interfered in her life, like when she had the car accident where she drove into the side of the church.

That’s a parody, of course, makes light of something serious and odious—we can all blame the devil for our giving into temptation, for our mistakes and oversteps. But this week we have seen the real nature and act of Satan in Charleston.

Do you believe the devil exists?

You heard the story of Jesus’ first encounter with Satan as he began his ministry.

Do you believe the devil is equal to God?

The Bible says the devil was once an angel, thus he is not equal to God. He is a created being; there is no dualistic system of good and evil. Only God is uncreated and self-existent. Thus Satan is not God’s “equal opposite” in terms of power and authority. Satan is *allowed* to be present here, though; *allowed* to test us.

We read in Revelation: “Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven. This great dragon -- the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world -- was thrown down to the earth with all his angels” (12:7-9).

The devil is a malignant spirit—like a mutation of a norm—created as an angel of light who attended God’s throne, but by sin become a defector, challenging God’s rule. Thus being once an angel, he is not the opposite of God but of angels. Satan, as ringleader, is the opposite of the archangel Michael. Satan and his devils rage against God. Since they cannot destroy God, they “fish for souls” like the youth said, hitting God where it hurts—by seeking to corrupt and ruin God’s children.

Jesus was not exempt. He experienced what you and I experience. Satan is *allowed* to be present here; *allowed* to test us. (Lk 22:31)

Satan enticed Jesus when he was weak; hungry; lonely—he hadn’t been around people for six weeks. Just as the youth video demonstrated, you will be tempted in the same ways.

¹ “Flip Wilson on the Ed Sullivan Show,” January 11, 1970, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SLife_a3NHQ, accessed June 23, 2015.

1. Satan tempted Jesus to put his physical needs first—for us that means to focus on my own desires
2. Satan tempted Jesus with fame and wealth—as if life on earth is all there is
3. Satan tempted Jesus to seek attention and power for himself—God will bless whatever you want. “Name it and claim it.”

The Bible references Satan or the devil nearly a hundred times. Satan’s traits are:

1. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy (Jn 10:10)
2. He accuses people before God (Zech 3:1)
3. He enters people and holds them in bondage (Mt 8:16, Jn 13:27, 2 Tim 2:26)
4. Satan is a liar (Acts 5:3)
5. He tries to prevent us from receiving forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18)
6. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and his demons also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14-15)
7. He is allowed to be a thorn in the flesh, tormenting us to keep us from being proud (2 Cor 12:7)
8. He sometimes blocks your way (1 Thes 2:18) (but never forever)
9. He takes advantage of your anger (Eph 4:26-27)
10. He strives to puff you up with conceit (1 Tim 3:6)
11. Satan deceives the world (Rev 12:9)
12. He uses all powers, signs, wonders, and evil deception for those who are perishing, *because they refused to love the truth and so be saved* (2 Thes 2:9-10)

So as you can see, we have some responsibility to love the truth to be saved.

C. S. Lewis says devils are ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling, concentrations upon self who perpetually concern themselves with their own advancement; all living in a grievance, living out passions of envy, self-importance, and resentment, pouring out scalding lava of hatred with passion to digest and consume others. (*Screwtape Letters*)

You can see why the killings in Charleston fit the description of Satan’s work. We can say all day long this guy was mentally ill but mentally ill people do not necessarily kill people. This guy was filled with Satan.

But Satan cannot steal those who belong to God. God tells us just such as that in the Bible. So how do we handle having an enemy in our midst?

Do not be afraid, the Bible says:

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SATAN: TESTIFY

- ✓ Jesus sent people out to testify and gave them power over demons. Rely on the power of your testimony. “[The people who went out to testify] returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning”” (Lk 10:17-18).

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SATAN: RESIST & HAVE CONFIDENCE

- ✓ James says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. *Resist the devil*, and he will flee from you” (4:7).
- ✓ Peter writes, “Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. *Resist him*, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Pet 5:8-10)

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SATAN: PRAY & KEEP ALERT

- ✓ “Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints” (Eph 6:18).

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SATAN: HAVE FAITH

- ✓ “With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Eph 6:16).

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SATAN: BELIEVE IN THE WORD

- ✓ “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17).

REMEMBER THE PROMISE:

- ✓ The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet” (Ro 16:20).

You are never alone in the battle and God will fight for you.

REMEMBER THE PROMISE:

- ✓ “I came that [YOU] may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10b).

Are you grateful for a Lord who says that to you? As the youth said, he will try to throw troubles and temptations your way. But even when the thief comes in to destroy, trust Jesus.

REMEMBER THE PROMISE:

- ✓ “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death” (Ro 8:1-2).

If you are his child, and you hear a voice of condemnation, remember, God never condemns. You are not accused or guilty before God because Jesus stands in your place and covers you fully. Tell that voice to sit down and be quiet! It’s Satan.

I was sitting in an airport last week after the tragic events in Emanuel A.M.E. Church, a work of Satan who wants to consume people with racism, hatred, fear, and terror. I watched a young man who refuses to love the truth, who has refused salvation, and who clings to the deepest darkness. I watch brokenhearted family members of the nine people he killed, one after one, offer forgiveness during arraignment, and urge him to turn to Christ. We saw Satan fall like lightning.

Their faith and love during this crisis was extraordinary. Commentators and reporters were visibly stunned. Some were crying by the power of their attitudes of forgiveness and love.

Why did they do that? One of them said *we are not going to be overcome by hate*. They refused the bondage of the devil. They refused to be where that young man is. They said it: “We will be free. We will follow our Lord, who also died, by the way, to do in the devil and save you.”

In session meeting this week, the Elders imagined if that tragedy had happened here. What would we have done? Would we have such a powerful testimony?

Well, it didn't happen here, but it reminds us that the work is not done. We decided we need to practice every day in order to stand up in crisis. **WHENEVER** you see someone being maligned, being treated ruthlessly, unjustly, suffering racism, swallowed up by an unjust, anger-filled person, threatened or defamed, *you must step up*. You must defend your neighbor, your friend, a stranger, and your LORD's mission. You must act in defense of the Gospel.

“Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:11-12).

And as you take your stand, remember, “the God of peace will shortly [and surely] crush Satan under your feet” (Ro 16:20).

AMEN

In Memory Of These Saints

Cynthia Hurd, 54 years old

Susie Jackson, 87 years old

Ethel Lance, 70 years old

Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, 49 years old

The Honorable Rev. Clementa Pinckney, 41 years old

Tywanza Sanders, 26 years old

Rev. Daniel Simmons, 74 years old, died at MUSC

Rev. Sharonda Singleton, 45 years old

Myra Thompson, 59 years old

“Jesus died a passionate death for us, so our love for Him should be as passionate.”

Sister Jean German Ortiz

Emanuel A.M.E. Church

Charleston, S.C.