

## Invocavit, the First Sunday in Lent, A ✕ D 2011

### Matthew 4:1-11

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

1 Last week the Federal Trade Commission announced increased efforts to fight be-your-own-boss scams. Offering unemployed or underemployed people the opportunity to work from home, do what you really want to do, set your own schedule, be free from a jerk boss, or whatever, these parasites have bilked people out of millions of dollars through their empty promises. Is it just the allure of a job in tough economic times that cause people to pay hundreds of dollars for coaching that will enable them to be their own bosses? Or is it something more? Or is it that the desire to be your own boss runs deep? It's an urge so instinctive there's almost nothing you can do to control it, it seems.

2 This desire goes back all the way to the beginning, or almost to the beginning. Quit submitting to that overbearing Boss, charmed the serpent. He's just withholding information for you, the knowledge of good and evil, for He knows that if you eat, you will be just like Him. Who needs a Boss? Who needs to submit to anyone else? Who needs an authority to tell her what to do? Not you. Be your own boss. If it feels good, do it. If it looks pleasing to the eye, watch it. If it looks good for food, eat it. Free yourself from the tyranny of having a domineering God to obey, a Word to which to submit. So they ate. They rebelled. And in so doing, they did what the devil promised they would: became their own gods.

3 Since that moment, the desire to be your own boss has been an engrained part of human nature. You do not, by nature, want a god. When the Commandments begin with the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods," they begin by telling you you need to be different from what you are. By nature, you want to be your own god. By nature, you rebel against God. By nature, you refuse to listen to and submit to the Word of God. To break any other commandment is always also to break the first. To steal or get by dishonest means is to place yourself upon the altar, worshiping you alone. When you succumb to your lustful flesh and commit adultery with your hands or with your eyes, you are worshiping yourself, fearing, loving, and trusting in yourself above anyone else. When you choose anything else on a Sunday morning than receiving God's gifts, you break not only the Third but also the First Commandment, placing your faith in yourself above all else. And when you break the Fourth Commandment, rebelling against parents and all other authorities, you're chiefly breaking the First Commandment, as it is God who has set those authorities over you.

4 Here is the point of Lent: to see more clearly how things truly are. Everyone bristles under authority, chafes under a yoke, because your human nature wants to do it your own way, without anyone else telling you how to do it. Your anger at your boss is not as often because you're right and he's wrong as it is because you don't want a boss. When you make fun of your teachers behind their backs, it's because you despise their authority. Wives hate to be told that God wants them to submit to their husbands. Husbands hate to be told that they're to submit to Christ. And, as long as the pastor is preaching the Law to someone else, that's ok, but when He wields the authority of the Office of Christ and the Word of God against me and tells me to quit my sins, wall, then it's time to start looking for another place to worship. Lent calls you to

admit how much you want to be your own boss and to turn in humble repentance and child-like submission to the Lord who is your boss. Repent. Submit. Yield. You cannot be your own boss.

5 Even Jesus submits. Even the Second Person of the Holy Trinity yields to the will of His Father. Even the Incarnate Word of God, through whom all things were created, at whose performative words all creation submits, does not His own will but the will of the One who sent Him, God the Father. Immediately after His Baptism, where God the Father declared of Him that “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” and where the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

6 There, for forty days, Jesus fasted and prayed while enduring an onslaught of temptation from the father of lies, the devil. Could He have yielded to the temptations? Could He have demonstrated His power over creation, turning stones into bread? Could He have thrown Himself off the pinnacle of the temple to test His Father’s care for Him? Could He have obtained all the kingdoms of the world with just a passing moment of worship? Could He have rebelled as did the first Adam, preferred to do things His own way? Sure. But He didn’t. Why not? For you.

7 Adam fell, and every descendant of his is fallen. But where Adam failed, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, succeeded. Adam gave in to the temptation to make himself his god, but Jesus submitted to the Father’s will. The first man made his belly his god, but the God-Man would not bow to His belly. Where the first man chose sin over fellowship with God, the New Man chose to set aside fellowship within the Trinity in order to become sin in your place. Jesus lived by faith, trusting His Father’s purpose in sending Him to take on human flesh to redeem humanity. Adam lived for himself; Jesus lived for Adam and for you.

8 And He won. He defeated the devil by resisting the onslaught of temptation. He withstood the temptation toward self-preservation, choosing to endure the cross instead. Jesus is not a mere example for how to overcome temptation. He is the victor. He crushed the devil’s head when He died on the cross. He took your sin and paid for it. The devil’s accusation is silenced.

9 For you as it did for Jesus, temptation follows Baptism. When the pastor marks you with the sign of the cross, the devil sees you in his crosshairs. Those snatched from the devil’s ownership in the waters of Baptism are his enemies. He hates you. He wants nothing good for you. All he wants is to hurt God by getting you to give up that precious gift of faith, to succumb to temptation over and over, to get you inadvertently to place yourself on the throne where God has placed Himself. And yet, the fiercer temptation is, the more comfort you can have. The more attention the devil pays to you, the more you are not his. The more he hates you, the more certainly you are a child of God. “You should worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve” because He alone has redeemed you, won you from sin, death, and the devil. You are not your own god; your God is He who died and rose for you, who answered for your sins. You are not the boss of you, and that’s a tremendously comforting thing. You don’t have to answer for your sins because they have been answered for by the death of Jesus.

10 “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Temptation will be fierce for God’s baptized, there’s no mistaking that. But Jesus endured temptation in your place and endured death and hell in your place. So He is able to help.

11 You are not your own god, thank God. Here, at His altar, underneath bread and wine, is your God for you. Jesus gives you His sinless flesh and blood, the flesh and blood that withstood the devil’s onslaught, for you to eat and drink for full and free forgiveness. Fed and nourished by your Lord’s true Body and Blood, you are steeled for the fight. If the devil could find no foothold in the fight against Jesus, neither can he find solid footing in the fight against God’s elect, nourished and strengthened with the Body and Blood of the only Sinless Son of God. Jesus won. His Holy Supper is the foretaste of the victory banquet. As he places and pours Himself into your mouth, you taste His victory over the devil, the forgiveness of sins.

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Pastor Jeff Hemmer