June 25/26, 2016

Follow His Lead

In Pursuit of the Wild Goose – 02

Luke 4:1-15

Pastor Josh Luse

Well, good morning. It is so good to gather together as the church and sing truths like this, isn't it, to remind ourselves of the truth that unites us as a church through Christ, through the Scriptures. It's been quite a summer already. It's been pretty fast for me. I'm excited about the things that are still coming up: VBS is right around the corner—it's going to be amazing—and tomorrow morning we're heading out with a couple of bus loads full of middle schoolers for a week of camp. So if you think of our middle school, you can be praying for those guys. It's going to be a great week! After the service, too, if you're hungry, we've got a high school team that's headed over to India, so they're making some pancakes, raising some funds for that trip. So get your crew together and go have some lunch and support that team.

I'm excited to be here this morning and I'm going to start with one question for you: How far would you go if God didn't tell you where He was taking you? Instead He just said, "Follow me." For many of us it's hard to get our minds in that spot, but maybe you imagine closing your eyes and He's telling you to follow and after a bit you start to wonder, "*Okay, God, where are you taking me?*" And then maybe circumstances change and you're not sure and you get a little more timid. Maybe the environment changes and you're not sure how far you'd go. Some of you know right now, "*No, there's a line right here. God, I'll go here but once You ask me to cross that line, that might be a little too much for me."* Last week Tim challenged us in our pursuit of God in this beautiful, mysterious study of the Spirit. And he talked about this ancient Celtic culture that, through hardship and hard times, pursued the Spirit—and they thrived through it. The gospel advanced and God did amazing things in the midst of difficulty. This ancient Celtic culture had a name for the Holy Spirit, this unpredictable One, this One that can't be boxed in, this One that leads us along. And they called it *the Wild Goose*. You might think that's a little weird, but maybe go up to a park this week in Lincoln. If there's a goose that lands, maybe go up to it and see what happens. They're kind of unpredictable.

Today we want to study a bit in Luke, Chapter 4, so turn to it with me, but I'd like to just begin with a word of prayer:

> *Father, thank you for the chance to be together this morning. Thank you for who You are and what You've done for us. Spirit, thank you for being right here, right now. Your presence is among us and we know that without You it's impossible for us to open up Scriptures and understand this deep truth. Spirit, we invite You to speak to our hearts this morning. We ask that You would reveal Your truth. We ask for strength to really mold and shape our hearts. God, we want to know You more. We want to follow You. So we pray that in these brief moments in the study of Your Word, You'd enable us and empower us in that. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Luke, Chapter 4: If you don't have a Bible, you can just listen along as I read. Verse 1:

> **Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing**

during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.' "

And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' "

And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand 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,
SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He *began* teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. (*NASB, Luke 4:1-15)

So, what's happening here as we dive right into Luke? If you look back in the chapter right before this you find that there was this wild man, John, who had come out of the wilderness and he was preaching, preparing the way for the Messiah who would come. There's a moment where he's down at the river and he's baptizing people and Jesus is there as well, and He comes to be baptized. You can actually read it with me in chapter 3, verse 21:

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." (Luke3:21-22)

Now it's interesting as we look through this, there's a beautiful culmination of the Trinity in this verse, and it's about to lead into some pretty incredible things. But there's a phrase that's used there from Psalm, chapter 2, verse 7: **You are my son**, and it was used in the commissioning of every king. It's a beautiful picture of the whole Trinity. There's a theologian, Frederick Bruner, and he used to draw a lot of simple pictures and stick figures to illustrate some huge and important points, so I thought maybe I would use a bit of his tactics here this morning.

(*Josh, drawing on a large white board):* So, when you think of the Trinity, you've got the Father; you've got the Son, and you've got the Spirit. It's this baffling, incredible, beyond-my-imagination thing—God who is one God yet in three persons—and in this verse we see that the Father is telling the Son, "Hey, this is My Son who I love. This is My Son who I care about. This is My Son who I'm pleased about." And Jesus, all He wants to do is glorify the Father. John, chapter 8, verse 54

says, "**If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing.**" So he seeks to desire to glorify the Father, to continue to bring all the praise back to the Father. And the Father, He knows that there's the need of a helper. He sends the Spirit down and He uses the Spirit's power to accomplish His will and so He trusts the Spirit. And the Spirit, all He wants to do is to please the Father. It's this incredible thing. But then the Spirit and the Son have this interaction as well. It says in verse 1 that **...Jesus, full of the Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit.** So...**led**...Mark actually uses the strong word *drove*. It's kind of this paradox because in one sense Jesus is submitting to the Spirit and He's listening and leading, and in the other sense the Spirit is leading and directing Him and there's this interaction going on between them and there's this love and this humble submission. And then in the midst of all this, we get an invitation into it...into community like none other...into a relationship like none other...and it's in this that our story starts to unfold here today.

Now it's saying that the Spirit *led Him*. What does that look like and what would that look like for us? Well, I'm going to draw another picture. (I've been working. My art teacher tells me I'm really improving a lot. It's Bryan Clark. You might have heard of him...*laughter)* So we think of Jesus and we see Him all throughout Scripture. He's happy today, alright? *(drawing a smiley face)* And Jesus: we see these characteristics, the way that He lived and even in the story, that He was human, fully human, fully God. So He went down to the river; He was baptized. *(Put a happy little tree right here...laughter...I think he does need a little bit of hair. There we go*.) We see these pictures all throughout Scripture. You say, "Tell me about Jesus," and people start to explain it pretty easily because we see all these attributes, but the Holy Spirit is this mysterious person. So we start to wonder, "What is the Holy Spirit and what's His role and how does He interact?" And Bruner refers to this as the "*Shyness of the Trinity"* and not shyness like timidity or like a fear, but of humble respect. The Spirit's role and His desire is always just to redirect the attention to Jesus. So if I were to draw the Holy Spirit, this is how I would draw Him right now. I would say, "Look at Him. Listen to Him. Learn from Him. Follow Him. Worship Him. Be devoted to Him. Serve Him. Love Him. Be preoccupied with Him." Are you getting the picture? The Spirit's whole role is to redirect us back to Jesus.

So in this beautiful loving relationship, where does God, where does the Spirit lead Jesus? Well, let's look at it. As we read in verse one, he **was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days.** Whoa, wait a minute. So the early readers would have read this and they would have instantly thought of some pieces that come into play for this. The **wilderness**, to Israel the wilderness was this picture of desolation. This picture represented everything that had gone wrong—of defeat, of isolation, of their unfaithfulness. **Forty**—there's that number throughout Scripture too—*forty* years the children of Israel wandered in the desert because of this. You see it in other places. Elijah spent *forty* days in the wilderness. Moses spent *forty* days on Mount Sinai. Even Goliath, the Philistine giant came and taunted Israel for *forty* days. We see *forty* days rain fell during the flood. The wilderness was not this excitingly great opportunity. It wasn't this camping trip. In fact the children of Israel had a pinnacle day every year—the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur—where they would take two lambs and they would slaughter one and take the blood of that lamb and place it on the other one. And they would take that lamb and they would lead it out into the wilderness and as they released it into the wilderness, it was this picture, symbolically, that God would take away their sins. The desert was a place of death and barrenness and yet this loving, caring, guiding Spirit takes Him there. What happens when he gets there? Forty days Jesus is fasting. It says**...being tempted by the devil.** Now the devil has this meaning, the *accuser*, and he has this plan that he tries all the time. He'll come in and say, "Did God really say that? Do you really have to do that? Isn't God loving and forgiving? If you do that right now, won't He just say, I'll forgive you?" And he tries to lull us into something but as soon as we give into that temptation,

he says, "You failure. How could you? You're such a screw-up. I can't believe that you're so unfaithful." That's his desire, and it's important for us as we look at the accuser to realize that temptation came from him. God does not tempt. God will test because he's a loving God, but He doesn't tempt. And it's also important to understand that temptation is part of the human experience. We're all going to be in that boat at some point. So as we read on it says,

> **… for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.** (Vs. 2)

Okay, so let me get this straight. Jesus is in the desert; He's in the wilderness; He's hot, and He probably has a lot of elements coming down. He hasn't eaten for forty days, and He's hungry. Like, why would they tell us He's hungry? Of course He's hungry! I miss one meal and I'm starving. Jesus is there forty days and He's hungry. Why? Because it plays into something even more and we'll get to that in just a little bit. But what does Satan decide he's going to do? He says, "**If You are the Son of God,**" Wait, ***if?*** ...because he wants Jesus to doubt a little bit. Are You really the Messiah? Can You do what it takes? All that God's asked of You, can You actually hack this? What if you can't? Could You be kidding yourself? And these people, have You seen these people? Are You sure? And then he goes on, "**If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.**" Now I knew that there was a problem with bread, and so this is my biblical support that it's wrong for gluten.*(laughter)* So Satan comes along and I'm thinking there's a lot of other temptations he could have done, but he brings bread. And I'm wondering what he says as he's sitting there with Jesus. I wonder what he's trying to get him to think. "Didn't God just tell You that He loved You? Back there at the river didn't He say He was pleased with You? And this is how He treats those that He loves? He has You almost starve to death? I mean, is it wrong to eat food? Food, is that a bad thing? Think of the children of Israel. They were in the wilderness and God provides manna for them, and they were complainers." He tries to come in to get us to question, to get us to think, not quite sure what, but there's a temptation that's way deeper than just eating at this point—because the stake of the world hangs on this, because it's a temptation to give into His desires and the desires of the devil rather than following where the Spirit is leading, rather than giving into the will of God. And I wonder what he's thinking like, "If I give people material things, they'll be satisfied. If I give them better jobs and bigger houses and more money, they'll be happy." And we will. We'll be satisfied for like a couple of seconds. And then that satisfaction will turn back into that void that cannot be satisfied through material things. So what happens? If Jesus doubts His call, the whole world is finished.

When you think of bread in this situation, I want you to think of Palestine. The bread isn't like the bread that we would pick up. It was small, round, crusty bread bowls. When you think of this desert and the picture of Satan's temptation, I think it helps us to put ourselves in that spot. So William Barclay described it this way. "This desert between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea was one of the most terrible deserts in the world, so much so that people called it by the name Jeshimon which means *the devastation*. We usually think of a wilderness as being sandy. But this was not a desert of sand; it was a limestone desert, covered, carpeted with little blocks of limestone and rocks. Across it ran ridges and hills all contorted and twisted with part of them all broken and jagged like a decayed tooth. When you walk across it or when you rode a horse across it, the noise of your feet or the animals' hooves sounded hollow. It was like walking across an oven that glistened and shimmered in the heat, and there was never anybody there."

Jesus was possibly more alone in this place than any other place in Palestine. I picture it just coming off a diet or missing a meal, and I'm walking the street and I look over and there's a bakery and I

look through this window and all across the whole landscape are these donuts, dotted everywhere. And then I see the sign right below it, "Free donuts!" and I wonder what I would do. Satan comes and meets Him right in His vulnerability. That's where he loves to challenge us. Jesus was hungry so he met Him there. Luke doesn't say that he *tried* to tempt Jesus, it says he *tempts* Jesus. I'm not sure what all Jesus was thinking but I know He understands temptation. If you are angry, Satan is going to try and tempt you there. If you're having problems with relationships, he's going to try and tempt you there. If you're bored, he'll tempt you there. If you're lonely, he's going to tempt you there. The thing I love is that we have somebody to follow. The Spirit says, "Look at Jesus."

There was a Russian artist; his name is Ivan Kramskoy. He painted this famous picture called "Christ in the Desert." He first started out and painted a picture of Jesus, but after he stepped back and looked at it, he thought, "*This looks like too much of Jesus' divinity and not enough of His humanity*." There wasn't any background so he did some research and study. He looked at some landscapes and when he came back, he painted another picture of Jesus. He had Him sitting on a rock; His feet were scratched up; His clothes were tattered; His skin was starting to sag from not eating for forty days. As you look at this picture you start to realize, "*Man, there is something to what Jesus went through."* He says he painted it, then, because he thought it was a reflection of life itself—big choices we have to make. As I look at it, I think this is a God that understands. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." People say that God doesn't understand, but He understands.

I don't know what spot you're in this morning but I think it's important, right now, to just stop for a second and reflect and be reminded of what Jesus went through and to realize He knows what you're going through. Maybe take a second to share that with Him right now.

[Song]

The wilderness is hard, and it's lonely and it's tiresome. It's brutal and it's a place you cannot survive on your own. But as you're in it, the Spirit promises, in your loneliness you are not alone. In your weariness He'll provide rest. In your trying times He's going to give you strength. In your brutality, He's going to give you shelter. In your despair, He brings hope. He invites you to draw closer to Him. Some people think that in the times of suffering we're farthest from God, but I don't believe that. I know that Jesus understood this. As I look back at my life I see some of the most difficult periods I've gone through are some of the most intimate times I've had with God. There's a piece of loneliness I believe that was created by God, and it's something worth wrestling with. Whenever we have that, it's something that only God Himself can fulfill, and it's always an invitation to Him. A man can't provide that; a woman can't provide it. You can't get it through your kids or through a relationship. It's only found in God! There's a difference between aloneness and isolation. There were times that Jesus needed to be alone. Even as you read the rest of this chapter, at the end, in the thick of His ministry, He took time to be alone. He got away from people and spent time with God so that he could go back with people. Isolation just says I want to stay away from people. It draws us secluded, with no intention of going back and it's dangerous. In the desert, invite Him to draw closer, to continue in. So how does Jesus answer this? In verse 4 he says:

It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'

Sure, we need bread but at this time, in this moment, My intention and My need is greater to follow My Father than to give into My desires or give into the temptation that the devil's putting before

Me. He's quoting from Deuteronomy chapter eight, verse three, and continues **...but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.**

Later on in the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verse 34, you find Jesus saying, **My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.**

So what happens next? Where does he go from there? Verse 5:

> **And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.** (Vs. 5-6)

...which is partly true. For a little bit, he's got some control. But we know in the end that's not the truth.

> **Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."** (Vs. 7)

Ah, there's the catch—a little shortcut for some power, for some authority. Now Jesus has got to be sitting there going, "This has been forty days in this wilderness and I haven't even started my ministry yet. The next three years are going to be an uphill battle and it's going to be tough. It leads into a greater wilderness that ends in the cross...but right now I could just kind of take a sidestep." I wonder if we take sidesteps. I wonder if there are ways that God asks us to live in integrity, in honesty, to follow Him into difficult things and we think, "Ah, I could just take a little step out and a little step back in." Because Satan is so subtle in his attacks and his temptation, he wants to derail us in any way possible. But what's Jesus' answer? Verse 8:

> **Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"**

He's saying, "No shortcuts for me. I trust in God's plan and I'll pursue His plan alone. So what's Satan trying? Verse 9:

> **And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here;**

There it is again: ***if***. But then he adds on,

> **For it is written**
>
> **'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,'**
>
> **and,**
>
> **'ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP,**
> **SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"** (Vs. 10-11)

So now Satan's coming, trying to tempt Him with safety and not only that; he's dropping in Scripture as well. He quotes from Psalm 91, but Jesus knows that you can't use Scripture and misinterpret it—that if you walk in sin, God doesn't somehow remove consequences. And as

Satan's trying to tempt Him, He may be thinking, "*Man, a four hundred thirty foot drop down and I'm unharmed. People would look at this and be wowed and amazed!"* But this wasn't what God had asked Him to do. It's another shortcut.

It's not like we ever take steps trying to do things our own way. Maybe we dive into a marriage. We don't follow any of God's plan and then we say, "God, bless our marriage." Maybe we're eating stuff—all sorts of food and junk—but right before we do, we say, "God, keep me healthy; Lord, bless this food." We do it in a lot of ways, but He's just going to keep continuing to follow God's plan alone. But it is interesting how safety can be a challenge in that, a temptation. And Jesus, what does He do? He comes back with Scripture again.

> **And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"** (Vs. 12)

He drops another truth bomb and I don't think He's just using Scripture to say it so that Satan backs away. I think there's power within Scripture, but I think the Spirit was giving Jesus Scripture to help guide Him, to help Him know where to go. So it was as much for Satan to know and understand as it was for Jesus to follow. So as He walks through this, we look through these temptations and I am wowed and amazed at what Satan tries to bring. He brings food, bread; he brings power, but this is the Son of God, and he brings safety. I wonder how many of us get tempted with safety. Like, "God, I'll go this far, but beyond that, it's a little scary." Satan takes legitimate stuff and tries to put Jesus' will in place of God's. But it's not accomplished. So then what's he do? Verse 13:

> **When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.**

He'd be back and he was. And he'll be back for you as well because he longs to trip us up. He longs to get us off course from what God has for us. He longs to try and help us sidestep the wilderness and miss the opportunities that God's got in place. And then it says:

> **And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,** (14a)

He's finished. He's gone through the wilderness and He comes in the power of the Spirit. And it's all smooth sailing from then, right? Just read the rest of this chapter alone! He goes back to His hometown and He pronounces that His ministry has started and He's the Messiah and what He's come to do—and then His hometown rejects Him. He finds Himself up on a cliff with this angry mob and they want to throw Him off. He goes from there and He encounters this demon. And then it's everybody and their dog lining up to try and get Him to heal him, to help him. It's the Sabbath day; the sun has just dropped and there are huge lines. Then after that, He encounters more demons. For Him, it was a continued long journey, but the Spirit was with Him in the midst of it. It says,

> **...and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.** (14b-15)

Of course news was spreading. The other gospels share with us that He was gathering disciples, that He performed His first miracle at a wedding feast, that He had gone through Samaria, kind of an uh-oh place and He was proclaiming the gospel and changing lives. This was not just about a temptation to Jesus. This was a chance to go and be tried and tested to show what kind of Messiah He would be.

I don't know what wilderness you've been in. As I've studied and been thinking through this, I thought of Pastor Bryan's series through 1 Samuel. I'm thinking there is truth that there is wilderness ahead for us. But I don't need to fear the wilderness; I just need to cling to the Spirit through it. And as I look through this past year I think, "Man there have been challenges that I've walked through and I've realized there's so much growth that I can have through those challenges." But then I got an email a couple of weeks ago from some dear friends that are connected to our church, who went overseas to Poland, are now part of our missions team, who have had a really challenging journey the last year. And as I read it I thought, "*Man, this fits exactly the truth that we're trying to find in the Scripture.*" What I love about this email is, it's not just what somebody's saying; it's what they're living. This is what Kurt wrote,

> *On a personal note, our family admits that this is perhaps the most difficult season that we have ever experienced. It's been a trial where immense fear and anxiety and doubts and sleepless nights and heartache have been so real, we could literally feel them piercing our hearts. For me, Kurt, I found myself in the weakest of moments, and at times like Justin feeling like it was impossible to breathe. There have been questions and doubts that have flooded my mind, always presented at key moments to attempt to instill within me bitterness, no hope, anger, even at moments feeling like God was not a present reality but rather at a great distance. I'm a firm believer that it is biblical for Christians to face trials —suffering, persecutions, and difficult times. What I don't understand is the mysterious elements of what we experience when we embrace suffering and trust our lives with Christ. When we entrust ourselves to our faithful Creator and continue to walk in faith and not by sight, Christ leads us to places of greater intimacy. Our character is refined. Christ miraculously causes us to grow in endurance and we are led to a place of truth and everlasting hope that does not disappoint. Maybe I would express it as, if we've entrusted ourselves in God's hands in the moments of our greatest fears and pains, He will lead us to places of spiritual intimacy but the road without pain and trials we never go to. One road attempts to escape the reality of suffering, only to find misery, whereas the road that follows Christ mysteriously embraces suffering only to find a much greater hope.*

It was Bob Goff that said, "God is not trying to make our lives easier; He wants to make them more meaningful." You can read through all of Scripture and you're never going to come across a spot that says, "And then the disciples were bored." It's not going to happen. As the Spirit leads us into this adventure, it's going to be filled with all sorts of things and it's something you cannot do on your own. For many of us, we think walking by the Spirit and living with the Spirit is just saying, "God, I will do things for You," but I don't think that's what it is. I think instead it's entering into what God does for you because some of us have drawn lines, "We'll do things for God up to this point, but we're not going to cross that." But sometimes God invites us past that, and we enter into what He's done for us. Sometimes what He invites you into is going to be different than your plans. Some of you know that. You've just come out of trials. You've just come out of the wilderness and you look back and you go, "I know." Some of you are in it right now. What does that mean for the rest of us? Guess what, it's coming. Encouraging word to end out with? No, but it's true. Jesus says, "**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**" And in that trial, in that wilderness, it's an opportunity to have the hope of a loving Father, the victory of a Son and a guidance of a Spirit that loves us because we are the people of God, with freedom in our hearts. So my question to you, once again, is: How far would you follow this *Wild Goose* if He didn't tell you where He was going? He just said, "Follow Me."

Jesus, thank you for Your words that give us hope. Thank you for Your victory that gives us an example. God, thank you for Your Spirit that guides us. Father, I pray that You would give hope to those right now in trials, to those right now who are walking through the wilderness. Show them who You are. God, I hope that You would give preparation to those that aren't, as they continue to seek and follow You one step at a time. God, I pray that this week, every day as we wake up, our first words would be, "Spirit, lead me and wherever You lead, I will follow." I pray this in Jesus' name.

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