

Luke 4

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[0 : 00] If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you.

! If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too. If you can wait to not be tired by waiting, or being lied about, don't deal in lies, or being hated, don't give way to hating, and yet don't look too good nor talk too wise.

If you can dream and not make dreams your master, if you can think and not make thoughts your aim, if you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two imposters just the same, if you can bear to hear the truth you have spoken, twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools, or watch the things you gave your life to, broken, and stoop and build them up with worn out tools, if you can make one heap of all your winnings and risk it all on one turn of pitch and toss, and lose and start again at your beginnings and never breathe a word about your loss, if you can force your heart and nerve and sinew to serve your turn long after they are gone, and so hold on when there is nothing in you except the will which says to them, hold on.

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, or walk with kings nor lose the common touch, if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you, if all men count with you but none too much, if you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run, yours is the earth and everything in it, and which is more, you'll be a man, my son.

So reads Rudyard Kipling's famous poem, If, penned in 1895. It's quite a moving poem, isn't it? The words of a father to a son as he presents his son with the various challenges of life and exhorts him to face them with courage and wisdom, humility and valour.

[2 : 12] The whole poem turns on that one word, if, if, if, if. It's how the father begins nearly every other line, as he entertains the possibility that his son might just be able to grow up and perform well.

And if he does, well, yours is the earth and everything in it. And what's more, you'll be a man, my son.

I wonder if you see the worldview behind Kipling's poem. It's the worldview of Greek stoicism, the stiff upper lip in the face of life's trials.

It's the worldview of secular humanism, the self trusting itself and exerting itself to achieve mature manhood. That one phrase is heard throughout, if you can, if you can, if you can.

And modern humanism chants in the background to the young man, yes, you can, yes, you can, yes, you can.

[3 : 21] But do you see the problem? If what we saw this morning is true, then the solution to the problems that plague our humanity do not lie within ourselves.

That's the false gospel of humanism. The solution to our problems lie outside ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ, the proper man.

The good news of Christianity hangs on the shoulders of the person of Jesus Christ. And one of the best insights into his humanity are his temptations.

When he faced the hardest tests of his life, when he faced the biggest challenge of his life, a fight with the devil himself.

But if we want to understand Jesus' temptations properly, then we must understand them in the whole context of the Bible. When Jesus faces the devil here in the wilderness, there are two shadowy figures from the Old Testament looking on.

[4 : 26] To put it in more theatrical terms, the drama of Jesus versus the devil unfolds on the front stage with two figures painted into the backdrop of that stage.

In the narrative, Jesus is front stage. If you look with me at chapter 3, verse 21 and 22, we'll see that Jesus is front stage.

Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased. So Jesus is affirmed as God's Son, that's obvious enough.

But now look at chapter 3, verse 23. Jesus, when he began the ministry, was about 30 years of age, being the son, as was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli.

[5 : 30] And then it gives the genealogy of Jesus. Just glance all the way down there, and you come all the way down to verse 38. The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

This genealogy is not actually needed. If you read from verse 22, it flows perfectly right into chapter 4, verse 1. You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.

Chapter 4, verse 1. And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There is no need to put the genealogy in here.

So the question is, why does Luke put it here? Why not put it at the beginning of his gospel, as Matthew does? Or in the birth narrative in chapter 2? Why place it here, when he has just been baptized, and he is about to head into the wilderness?

Well, look how it ends. The son of Adam, the son of God. Luke wants us to read this story of Jesus' temptations with Adam in the background.

[6 : 40] Adam is a son of God. And Luke wants us to watch Jesus' temptations unfold on the front stage, with the shadow of Adam on the backstage.

Adam, the son of God, forms the backdrop to this drama. But there's a shadow of another son in the background as well. I wonder if you spotted him.

Chapter 4, verse 1 and 2. And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were over, he was hungry. Who's the other son? Well, what do forty days in the wilderness, being led by God, remind you of?

It's Israel in the desert for forty years, being led by God. And in Exodus chapter 4, Israel is called God's son.

[7 : 43] Moses goes to Pharaoh and says, God says, let my son go, that he might worship me.

Israel is a son of God. And Luke has given us the location, wilderness, and the timing, forty days of Jesus' temptation, so that we watch this drama unfold with the shadow of Israel in the backdrop.

So that's the drama we're watching on stage. It's not one son and the devil. It's three sons and the devil. Adam, the son of God.

Israel, son of God. And Jesus, son of God. In 1975, my parents gave birth.

No, sorry, they both didn't give birth. They were given a son. My mother gave birth. And as they held their first son in their arms in those early days, they were, I'm sure, saying to themselves, what kind of son will he be?

Will he be an extrovert or an introvert? Will he be studious or sporty? And then in July 1977, I was born.

[8 : 56] And I'm sure they looked at me and said, what kind of a son will he be? Will he be like the first son that we had? Or will he be different? And then in November 1980, they had another son.

I'm sure they looked at him and said, what kind of son will he be? Will he be like the first one? Or like the second one? Or will he be different? It's what parents do, don't they? They compare their children.

This one's quiet. This one's loud. This one's chilled. Comparisons go on all the time. And it's the same as you read the Bible's storyline. It's a story of three sons.

Adam, son of God. Israel, son of God. Jesus, son of God. And each time you meet each of the sons, you're asking yourself the question, what kind of a son is he?

And in the case of Israel and Jesus, we say, will he be like the first son? Well, we saw this morning that Adam was a disobedient son.

[10 : 03] He chose to disobey his father's law and as a result, he was punished. He chose to worship a creature, the serpent, instead of the creator, God his father. In a garden paradise, the first son of God failed and received God's penalty of punishment and was removed from the garden.

And it's the same with God's second son, Israel. At Sinai and in the wilderness, Israel proved to be a disobedient son. He was given food by God in the wilderness. Note the same theme of food.

Both sons of God are given food. And yet he complained. And when God gave his law to his son, within days his son had broken the law by worshipping a creature, the golden calf, instead of his father.

So God's first son, Adam, disobeyed and was punished. And God's second son, Israel, disobeyed and was punished. And now here is Jesus, God's son, and he's outside a garden paradise, in a desert, being tempted by the devil.

And the question is, what kind of a son is he going to be? Now God, we've seen in chapter 3, verse 22, tells us what kind of a son he is.

[11 : 24] This is my beloved son. With him, I am well pleased. But while the father may think he is special and good, he hasn't really been tested yet, has he?

It's one thing to affirm something about your son, it's quite another to see the evidence. Parents do this all the time. We talk up our children in ways that are exaggerated and less to do with reality. There's often more pretense behind what we say about our children than there is performance. Well, God the father doesn't want to just to be seen, to talk up his son.

He also wants his son to prove himself to us. Did you notice the double reference to the spirit in verses 1 and 2? Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the spirit into the wilderness.

The devil is not the prime agent here. He is an intermediary agent in the temptations. Yes, he is the prime agent who brings the temptations because God cannot and does not tempt.

[12 : 29] And yet the whole scenario is set up by God. Jesus is led, not by the serpent, not by Satan, into the wilderness.

He's led by the spirit into the wilderness. This is a test from God. Just as Adam was tested in the garden to see what was in his heart, and just as Israel was tested in the wilderness to see what was in his heart, so God tests Jesus outside a garden, in a wilderness, to see what is in his heart. God tested each of his three sons to see what controlled their wills, to see if they loved him with heart and soul and mind and strength.

And in this passage, Luke shows us that Jesus does indeed live up to God's affirmation in chapter 3. He shows us this in four ways, three in this story and one at the end of the gospel that we'll look at.

Number one, Luke presents Jesus as, first, a son who depends on God wholly. A son who depends on God wholly.

[13 : 43] Chapter 4, verse 2 to 4. He was being tempted for 40 days by the devil and he ate nothing during those days and when they were over he was hungry.

The devil said to him, If you are the son of God, command this stone to become bread. And Jesus answered him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

Now Jesus wasn't Clark Kent. He wasn't Superman, that person who appeared to be like a man but we know that he wasn't a man. Jesus' humanity was not a foil for who he really was.

He was God but he wasn't really a human being. That kind of teaching is what's called docetism from the Greek word docetio to think, to seem.

It was an early church heresy. The idea was that Jesus was God, yes, but he wasn't really a man. He just seemed to be a man in people's eyes.

[14 : 45] But we must get rid of any docetism in us. Jesus was truly God and truly man. And he was starving for 40 days, hungry, fasted for 40 days and at the end he was quite literally starving.

Verse 3. He was hungry. And the devil says to him, If you are the son of man, command this stone to become bread.

There's the temptation. He has not eaten for 40 days. Now the word if can be a little bit misleading. It's not a statement of doubt. Satan knows exactly who Jesus is.

That's why he's tempting him. It's really translated, or better translated, since, since, if it is true, you are the son of God, then, turn stones into bread.

Satan's not doubting Jesus' sonship. He's assuming it and asking him to prove it. Now what could possibly be wrong for Jesus to have a wee nibble on a bit of granite come whole wheat bread?

[15 : 56] I mean, later in the gospel, doesn't he feed 5,000 people by multiplying bread? So I mean, come on Jesus, treat yourself the wee bit of granite loaf. What could be possibly wrong with that?

You will use your power to feed others. Why not use your power to feed yourself? So the question is, what is wrong with turning stones into bread?

I mean, come on. He turns water into wine? Well, it's this. Satan is tempting Jesus to act independently of his father and to provide for himself independently from his father. Do as you please when you please. Are you hungry, Jesus? Have some lime rock come loaf. It's a test of dependence on God versus independence from God. Satan challenges him to prove his sonship through independent thinking and acting. For Jesus to turn stones into bread, he would have to act independently from God instead of being dependent on God, waiting for his father's provision. [17:11] salvation. It's exactly what Adam was tested with in the garden. He was tested with a fast just as Jesus is tested with a fast.

That was the sin of Adam. God gave him every tree to eat from except one. God showed himself to Adam to be a God of abundant provision for his creatures. you can eat from any tree except one. But Adam chose to live not dependent on God and on his provision but independent on his own provision, the forbidden fruit. And in so doing he made God look like a scrooge. He made God look tight and stingy. That was the sin of Israel in the desert, wasn't it? Also, God provided daily manna every day and yet by grumbling and complaining about the food, they refused to live dependently on God's provision. Israel even contemplated returning to Egypt to live in their own provisions. Their grumbling was an expression of not living dependently on God. They made God look tight and stingy as if he didn't provide for his son.

[18:28] And in each case the devil was saying to Adam and Israel, and now to Jesus, God's tight. He doesn't have your best interests at heart. He doesn't provide for his sons.

Act independently. Take the fruit. Provide for yourself. Eat the fruit. Return to Egypt where we sat around fires and what do they say?

We ate lamb from the pots. It's all about food. It's all about provision. Will God provide for me or not?

Well, Jesus' response reveals that this temptation is all about trustful dependence on God. Verse 4, And Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

Man shall not be dependent on bread alone. The quote is from the Old Testament. Now, when there are quotes of the Old Testament and the New Testament, you've got to, here's another picture for your mind, you've got to think of an iceberg.

[19:34] Okay? What do you see in the sea when you see an iceberg? Well, you see the tip of it coming up over the sea, but what's underneath? They say at least two thirds or more is underneath the surface.

And Old Testament quotes in the New Testament are a bit like the icebergs. The bit that's quoted is the bit above the surface. But there's a whole bit below the surface that sort of comes with it. That is, they might quote a line from the Old Testament, but actually what comes with it is the whole chapter, okay, or the rest of the verse. And that's what's going on here.

All Jesus says is, you man shall not live by bread alone. But we know if you go to Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 3, it goes on to say, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

And by quoting just that section, Jesus means the whole thing. In other words, human life does not consist in simple dependence on food, but in total dependence on God's word.

[20:35] If you want to be a human being, this weekend, you can eat your food next door, but you have not exhibited true humanity, if that's all you do.

true humanity is exhibited in total dependence on God's word. Adam chose to act independently of God.

He took the forbidden fruit. Israel acted independently of God. They grumbled about the given food, but not so this son. He's different.

Here is a son who depends on God wholly. Number two, a son who worships God only.

A son who worships God only. Verses five to eight. And the devil took Jesus up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said to him, to you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I will give it to whom I will.

[21:40] If you then will worship me, it will all be yours. And Jesus answered him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

The temptation is a simple one. In order to receive all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus must worship Satan. There are echoes in verse six of Psalm chapter two verse eight and Daniel chapter

seven verse fourteen.

In verse six the word giving and I will give to you all the kingdoms. Psalm two verse eight ask me and I will give you the nations as your inheritance.

And the reference to authority in verse six reflects Daniel seven verse fourteen. I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given authority and glory and a kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him.

His authority is an everlasting authority which shall not pass away. His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. So think about it.

[22 : 57] Psalm two verse eight Daniel seven verse fourteen made clear that the kingdoms of the world would be given to God's son.

It was just a matter of how he was going to get them. Would he take the shortcut here by worshipping Satan and receive all the kingdoms of the world or would he take the long course of suffering and obedience and then receive all the kingdoms of the earth.

The father's will is the long course Satan's will is the short course. What Satan is trying to get Jesus to do here is to grasp for something before his time.

He's trying in essence to destroy God. He's trying to get Jesus to snatch something from his father before his father's ready to give it to him.

And Jesus responds in verse eight you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. A quote from Deuteronomy six verse thirteen.

[24 : 05] Jesus chooses to worship God only. As God's son Adam exchanged the worship of his father for the worship of a creature, a serpent.

As God's son Israel exchanged the worship of his father for the worship of another creature, a calf. As God's son Jesus is tempted to worship Satan but instead he worships his father only.

and because of his loyalty he will be rewarded with sovereignty. Adam bowed the knee to a serpent, he was kicked out of the garden of paradise.

Israel bowed the knee to a calf and later to the beals and he was later kicked out of the promised land. Jesus refuses to bow the knee to Satan and as a result he will be given this land and every land and all the kingdoms of the world.

Here is a son who worships God only. Well Luke is showing us a son who depends on God wholly, a son who worships God only and third a son who trusts God completely chapter 4 verse 9 to 12.

[25 : 21] And he took him to Jerusalem and set him 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 lest you strike your foot against a stone.

And Jesus answered him it is said you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Jesus has quoted the Bible, Old Testament to Satan twice and now Satan tries his own go at a bit of Bible memory recitation.

He quotes Satan quotes Psalm 91 a psalm that promises God's protection for those who trust in him. If the first temptation was to test God's provision this one is about testing God's protection. What Satan is saying to Jesus here is let go and let God. Let go and let God. In a sense Satan was saying to Jesus what he said to Adam.

You will not surely die. Jump off the temple you will not surely die. Won't your father send you the angels to protect you?

[26 : 38] And the reason he's saying that is because of where Jesus is standing. The temple was a symbol of God's presence. If God is going to rescue anyone it will be his son whom he loves and if he's going to rescue his son anywhere it will be on his front doorstep at the temple.

He's hardly about to let his son die in his own home. But the problem with Satan's quote is that it's out of context. If you flick back with me to Psalm 91.

Psalm 91. Keep your finger in Luke 4. Psalm 91 verse 1 and 2.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord my refuge and my fortress my God in whom I trust.

Do you see what Psalm 91 is about? It's about those who trust in the Lord for refuge not about those who test the Lord for refuge. Hence why Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6.16 back in Luke 4 and says do not test the Lord your God.

[27 : 53] Again it's not the full quote it's like that iceberg it's just the tip and when you go and you read Deuteronomy 6 verse 16 it says you shall not test the Lord your God as you did at Massa.

Now what did Israel do at Massa? Well in Exodus 17 they said this is the Lord among us or not? They were complaining about the water and the bread and they're saying is he with us or not? Where's his presence? Will he really do what he said he will do? Provide for us. And that was Satan's temptation to Jesus. Test and see if God is really with you.

Test and see if he is true to his word whether he will be your refuge or not. See if he is your father or not. But the problem with Satan's test is that God the father is not the one on probation.

Jesus is. And Jesus resists the temptation. He trusts his father's protection. He does not test his father's protection. He trusts that his father is present and will provide for him in due course.

[29 : 06] He does not test his father's presence. Adam in the garden tested to see if God would do what he said he'd do. Punish if they ate from the forbidden tree.

Will we really die if we eat from this? Israel in the desert tested to see if God would do what he said he'd do. Provide for them by being present with them.

Is the Lord among us or not? And Jesus at the temple does not test if God would do what he said he'd do. Protect him.

Rather he trusts that God will protect him because he trusts that God is with him. Here is a son who trusts God completely.

So we've seen that Jesus has passed the test three times. A son who depends on God wholly, a son who worships God only, and a son who trusts God completely.

[30 : 10] But this was not Jesus' last temptation. Did you notice that in verse 13? And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

When was that opportune time? Well, we know the Pharisees were children of the devil who constantly attacked Jesus.

We have the incident where Peter tries to stop Jesus going to the cross and Jesus says, get behind me, Satan. But Satan returns with his most forceful temptation during Jesus' passion.

In Luke chapter 22, we read that Satan enters Judas Iscariot just before the Last Supper, and then Judas goes out into the night to betray Jesus.

Jesus' last temptation is one long, extended temptation that lasts from Gethsemane till Golgotha.

[31 : 14] I want you to come with me and let us see this temptation. Luke 22, verse 39. And Jesus came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives.

And the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation. The place is the garden of Gethsemane.

And he withdrew with them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And when he rose from prayer, he said to the disciples, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

[32 : 31] Do you note the theme of temptation? verse 40, pray that you may not enter into temptation. Verse 46, pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Verse 42, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.

I just want to pause there. we're so used to reading the final words, but not my will be done, but yours, that we skip over those first words.

If you are willing, Father, please take this cup from me. Do you see that?

Jesus Christ wanted to walk away from the cross. He was in turmoil. He was in anguish.

[33 : 34] He had convulsive fear. As John Calvin put it, in Gethsemane, Jesus trembled at death. What he was about to go through on the cross, crucifixion, but more, far more, the black hole of God's wrath.

It brought him to within a hair's breath of a nervous breakdown. What this perfect son saw in Gethsemane was his father with the sword raised.

So much so that God had to send an angel from heaven. Did you notice that in verse 43? And there appeared an angel from heaven. Why? To strengthen him.

God had to send an angel from heaven to strengthen Jesus so that he would go to the cross. He was that close to wanting to pull out.

And after the angel strengthens him, he continues in anguish so that his sweat is like drops of blood dropping from him. This is surely what Hebrews 5 or 7 means when it says that Jesus offered up loud cries and tears to his father.

[34 : 56] Here was a man in anguish and turmoil on the brink of a breakdown. Donald Macleod writes movingly, the wonder of the love of Christ for his people is not that for their sakes he faced death without fear, but that for their sake he faced it terrified.

And that is what he did. He faced it. Not my will be done, but yours.

The final part of this one long temptation comes on the cross. If you flick over to chapter 23, verse 35. And the people stood by watching, saying, but the ruler scoffed at him, saying, he saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one. The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. There was also an inscription over him, this is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who were hanged, reeled at him, saying, are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.

[36 : 20] See the temptation three times? Save yourself, save yourself, save yourself. Yet Jesus remains on the cross.

He doesn't save himself so that he can save us. And in that moment he was treated by God like he was the greatest rapist, the greatest murderer, the greatest porn addict, the greatest materialist, the greatest idol worshipper, the greatest tax invader, the greatest blasphemer that has ever walked on the earth.

He remained on that cross in darkness, receiving the wrath of God in our place. He resisted the temptation to trust to save himself so that he could save us.

And that is Luke's final presentation of Jesus, a son who obeys God perfectly. A son who obeys God perfectly.

Here is the perfect son. And his father says to us this morning, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

[37 : 35] Here is the perfect man. Rudyard Kipling's poem was that he thought problem, sorry, was that he thought his son could maybe be a man, could maybe attain mature manhood.

If you can, if you can, if you can, which son or daughter of any father has ever lived their life well enough to earn the world and everything in it.

But here is a man who has the right to the world and everything in it. Here is the proper man. From conception to the cross, from the cradle to the grave, Jesus Christ was impeccable in his humanity. Here is the perfect Israel. Here is the perfect Adam. And here is where the hope of the world lies. Not in the first Adam, that great giant to whom we are all hooked.

No, our hope lies in this second great giant, Jesus Christ. Because where the first Adam failed, Jesus, the second and last Adam, does not fail.

[38 : 49] Where Adam succumbed to the serpent in a garden of plenty, Jesus resisted the devil in a wilderness of scarcity. Where Adam failed by keeping silent and not speaking God's word to rebuke the serpent, Jesus opened his mouth.

And what does he say? It is written, God has said, and he rebukes the serpent. Where Adam stood in a garden and said, my will be done, not yours as it is in heaven, Jesus knelt in a garden and said, not my will be done, but yours as it is in heaven.

Where Adam stood by a tree naked and disobeyed God, Jesus hung on a tree naked out of obedience to God. Where Adam stood by a tree alive and brought death, Jesus hung on a tree dead and brought life.

Where Adam failed to crush the serpent's head by a tree, Jesus crushed his head on a tree. brothers and sisters, here is humanity par excellence.

The doctrine of humanity is the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ. There is no true humanity outside him. There is no true humanity without him.

[40 : 12] Unless you are connected to Jesus Christ, you are not acting, living like a true human being. Do you want to be truly human?

Then get connected to Jesus Christ. Because Jesus saves us as much by his life as by his death. You see, his death was only a sufficient sacrifice to God because it was a perfect death. And it was only a perfect death because he lived a perfect life.

He saves us as much by his life as by his death. Sinclair Ferguson puts it, it's as if all the medals and honors of Christ are pinned to your chest and all of heaven salutes you.

You don't just need your sins forgiven to go and live with God. You need righteousness put into your account. God doesn't just bring up your minus 100 to zero when he justifies us.

[41 : 22] He also adds 100%. He forgives the minus 100 because of Christ's death and he adds 100% because of Christ's perfect life.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is the gospel. gospel, in a manger, in the city of Bethlehem, in the troubled streets of Nazareth, in a carpenter's shop, in a wilderness, in the garden of Gethsemane, and then on a hill called Golgotha, there was a son who perfectly obeyed his father so that his father might become our father and all heaven might salute us.

We're going to close by