

# Christmas 2015

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 25 December 2015

Preacher: Nick Louw

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, this morning, we're going to play a game. Who wants to play a game? Okay, I want you to spot the superhero. I'm going to show you a picture that's a little bit of...

Oh, wow. That was quick. It's a little bit... Let me just tell you the rules first, okay? This is a little bit of a picture of a superhero. You've got to tell me what superhero it is. Okay, what about the first one? Spider-Man. All right, that was an easy one.

Let's see the whole picture. There's Spider-Man. All right, and here's for a bonus point. What special powers does Spider-Man have? Spider-webs? He can shoot spider-webs. What else can he do? He can climb up walls like a spider. Okay, what about the next one? Let's see how clever you are.

What about this one? Witch X-Man. Wolverine. All right. Nice one. Okay, now what special powers does Wolverine have? It's louder, louder. Can't hear you?

What? He's got an adamantium skeleton, 10 points. What else? And he can heal himself. He's got super healing powers. All right, you seem to be very good at this.

[ 1 : 06 ] Let's see the next one. That's a bit of a trick one. What's this one? Superman. And what special powers does Superman have? He can fly. What else can he do? He's super strong. He can do lots of things, can't he, Superman?

Except when he's near Kryptonite. Remember that. Okay, what about the next one? This is a trick one. Oh, well done. Cyclops. Who was that? Who was that there? Nice, nice. I don't think... Okay, you're not allowed to guess anymore. All right.

You're stealing it from the little children. All right. Okay, let's see Cyclops. Now, what special power does Cyclops have? What can he do? Don't you know what Cyclops can do?

Okay, Rico, you're allowed to speak now. What can Cyclops do? He's got laser eye thingies. He's got beams of energy that come... Okay, fine. Well done. Now, let's see if you can get this one.

Okay, this is a little bit difficult.

Wow. Who is that? Put up your hands. Well done. It's the Flash. Well done. I thought the Flash is a little bit older than the rest of them, so I didn't know if you'd get it.

[ 2 : 18 ] So, well done. What can the Flash do? What superpowers does he have? He can run super, super fast. Well done. Okay, now I want to ask you a question. All of these superheroes that we saw, what makes them superheroes?

Why do we call them superheroes? Because they wear tights. All right. So, everyone who wears tights is a superhero. And they wear their underpants on the outside as well.

That's also a qualification. What else? What else does a superhero do that's different? What makes a person a superhero? They've got special powers. Yeah, so they've got special powers. They can do things that ordinary people can't do.

What else? They help people. Yeah, because, you know, you've got super villains as well who have special powers, but they're not superheroes because they don't help people. The superheroes are the ones who fight the super villains and they help people.

They keep people safe. So, there's two things, right, that make a superhero. I want you to see this morning. Special powers. They can do things that other people can't. And they fight the enemies, the super villains who are trying to hurt people.

[ 3 : 26 ] Now, last question, boys and girls. Are any of these superheroes real? No, unfortunately not. It would be great if they were, but they're made up, aren't they?

Sorry to disappoint you if you thought they were real. These superheroes are made up. They're just the stuff of comic books and movies. But, don't be too disappointed this morning because I want to talk about a superhero who is real this morning.

No? Superman's not real. Guess again? Here's a clue. It's the person that Christmas is all about. Jesus. Yes, Jesus. I want to show you this morning how Jesus is actually the greatest superhero the world has ever seen.

And he's real. A real superhero. Because, you see, Jesus, think about it, he came to do something that we can't do, that ordinary people can't do.

And he came to fight an enemy who's trying to hurt us. Even today. And we learn about this in the book of Matthew, in that passage that Gene read for us, where we read about this strange encounter that Jesus had in the desert when he was grown up.

[ 4 : 40 ] And it was here that he came face to face with a real, scary, deadly enemy. And I'm not talking about some made-up enemy like Mr. Freeze or Magneto.

No. I'm talking about a real enemy. The enemy that the Bible tells us about. The enemy known as the devil or Satan. Now, people don't like to talk about the devil today.

Lots of people don't even believe that the devil exists. Which is exactly what he wants. Because, you see, he works best when no one notices him. When he works behind the scenes, invisibly, in the background.

But even though we can't see him, he is real. And the Bible says that. The Bible teaches us that. And so we need to know about him and how he works. And on this occasion in the desert, he actually made himself known to Jesus.

He met with Jesus face to face. And the reason is because I think he was very scared of what Jesus came to do. He knew that Jesus came to beat him. To fight him.

[ 5 : 43 ] And so here, right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the devil tries to get Jesus to join him instead of to fight him. He tries to tempt Jesus over to his side.

You know, kind of like when Darth Vader tries to tempt Luke to the dark side. Right? That's kind of like what the devil is doing here. But for real with Jesus. He's trying to tempt him over to his side. And I want you to notice this morning how he tries to do that. It's very important we see. Because he's very clever. He used three temptations. Three different temptations to try to get Jesus to join him.

And look at what they are. Firstly, he tried to get Jesus to stop listening to God. Okay? We're told that Jesus was fasting. Anybody know what fasting means?

It's not like running very fast. Something else here. Anybody know? It means not eating food for a very long time.

[ 6 : 41 ] So Jesus didn't eat any food for 40 whole days. Now that's a lot. I know, boys and girls, you grumpy when you don't eat food for 40 minutes. Let alone, imagine 40 days. Now why would Jesus do that?

Well, you see, Jesus did that because it was a special way that Jesus trained himself to listen to God. And to want God more than he wanted food or any other things that his body wanted. But it wasn't easy for him. He was a human just like us. And so he got really, really hungry. And so it was right then that the devil appears and he takes his opportunity. And listen to what he says. Listen to how mean the devil is. Verse 3. The tempter came to him and said, If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Now that was mean, wasn't it? And the devil knew that Jesus was fasting. That he was deliberately not eating food to listen to God's word and to come close to God. And so he tried to distract Jesus.

[ 7 : 42 ] He tried to stop Jesus from doing that by distracting him with food. The thought of food. Because Jesus could have turned these stones into food. He's God's Son. He can do anything. He could have made these nice big stones into steaming chia butters or whatever.

But you see what the devil was trying to do. He was trying to get Jesus to put his physical needs ahead of his spiritual needs. Trying to distract him. But I want you to look at how Jesus answers him.

Verse 4. It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And so Jesus knows from the Bible that listening to God is more important even than food.

Which at that time was just going to distract him from God. So he doesn't give in. He wins. Satan loses. Jesus won. Satan null. And so the devil tries something different.

Look what he does next. Seeing Jesus isn't going to be distracted from listening to God's word. Secondly, he tries to get Jesus to doubt God's word. Have a look. Verse 5.

[ 8 : 46 ] Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down. For it is written, he will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

And so now you see what the devil is doing. He's quoting a bit of the Bible that promised that God would protect his son from harm. And he wants Jesus to doubt that.

He wants Jesus to wonder if that's true. He's kind of saying, come on, Jesus. Why don't you see if that promise is true? Come on. But you know what Jesus does? He doesn't do it.

And listen to what he says. Verse 7. Jesus answered him, it is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test. So again, Jesus quotes from the Bible and he knows that he doesn't have to test God.

Because if he had to do that, then it would have shown that he didn't really believe what his father promised him. But he did believe it. He trusted his father and he didn't need to test his promises.

[ 9 : 54 ] And so the devil loses again. Jesus to the devil zero. But that doesn't stop him. He does one more thing. One more thing he wants to try.

And that is, thirdly, he tries to get Jesus to disobey God altogether. Now you see, now is when the gloves come off. Now is when we see what the devil really, really wants.

And why he wanted Jesus to forget about God and to doubt God's word. Because really he wants Jesus to disobey God's word and join him. Look at what he says. Verse 8.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me.

You see, the devil knows something about Jesus. He knows that Jesus is not only the son of God, but he's also going to be the king of God's kingdom one day.

[ 10 : 51 ] But because the devil has some kind of power over the earth's kingdoms, he decides to offer Jesus a shortcut to becoming king by joining him.

And so he doesn't have to go through all that he was going to go through. It's a very tempting offer. But what do you think Jesus did? Do you think he did it? No. Like before, he didn't give in.

And by that time, he really had had enough of the devil. And so listen to what he says. Verse 10.

Away from me, Satan. For it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

Then the devil left him and the angels came and attended him. I love it how Jesus just has enough of Satan. He just says, go away. And Satan has to go away because Jesus is much stronger than Satan.

But I want you to notice that Satan couldn't beat Jesus. No matter how hard he tried, even though he used his cleverest strategy, it didn't work on Jesus.

[ 11 : 49 ] And he was probably quite disappointed that he lost because this strategy normally does work. It's worked so many times before. And we see that if we read further back in the Bible, in the Old Testament.

We learn about a group of people called Israel. People who God chose to be in a special relationship with him. And people who he rescued miraculously.

How did he rescue them, boys and girls? Do you know how God rescued Israel? Anybody? From Egypt? He did something amazing. Anybody? No, not yet.

But have a look at the picture behind me. This might give you a clue. He parted the sea to help Israel to escape from the Egyptian armies. And then he rescued them and defeated the Egyptian armies for them.

I'm sure you learned that in Sunday school. I hope you learned that in Sunday school. But then you know what happened after this? Something we don't often remember. Is that after they escaped, they traveled through the desert.

[ 12 : 51 ] And they lived there for 40 years. And the devil came to them during that time. And tempted them away from God. With exactly the same temptations that he tempted Jesus with in the desert.

He tempted Israel to forget God's word. And to put their physical needs first. He tempted Israel to doubt God's word. And to forget all that God had promised them.

And then once they doubted God's word. He tempted them to disobey it. And they worshipped other things. And they made other things more important than God. And so they turned away from God.

And they fell out of relationship with him. It was very sad. And that's exactly what the devil wanted. That's what he's always wanted. He doesn't want people to know God. And be in relationship with God.

And worship God. And so his trick worked with Israel. But you know what? It didn't only work then. It still works today. The devil is still around.

[ 13 : 52 ] Even though we can't see him. And he's using exactly the same tricks on people today. And it's working. Because he gets us to focus so much on what we want in life.

That we forget to listen to God. And then he tempts us to doubt whether God's word is actually true at all. And then when we do that.

Then he tempts us to disobey it. To do things that God says we mustn't do. And so you know what happens? Well like what happened to Israel.

We fall out of relationship with God. Which is the worst thing that can happen to any of God's creatures. And that's why the world is like it is today. That's why it doesn't work properly.

Because our enemy. The devil. Has managed to keep us away from God. And so you know what we need? We need a superhero.

[ 14 : 48 ] Don't we? We need someone who can beat our enemy for us. And we have one. The real superhero. You see the reason Jesus met the devil in the desert.

Was to win where Israel lost all those years before. The reason he fasted for 40 days. Was to take the place of Israel who were there for 40 years. But not just Israel.

He was there to take our place as well. Because we also lose to our enemy every day. Don't we? We often forget God. We often chase after the things in life.

Rather than the God who gave us those things. And we don't listen to God. And we often don't do what he says. And so. We should be separated from God.

In this life. And for eternity. And the worst thing. Is that there's nothing we can do to fix that. Even if we wanted to obey God. We keep falling short of how he wants us to live.

[ 15 : 50 ] We keep on being tempted away from him. And we can't help it. And that's why we need a superhero. Someone who does what we can't do. And someone who comes and beats our enemy for us.

Now at Christmas. We celebrate Jesus coming to earth. Jesus being born. But I hope this morning you see why that's so special. Why we're celebrating that this morning. Why Jesus came to earth. Jesus came to earth to do what we couldn't do. In our place. Yes. And he went on to do that ultimately. When he died on the cross for our sins.

He came to do what we couldn't do. And the best part. Is that the Bible says that now. If you trust in that. And you follow Jesus. Everything he did. Can count for you as well.

Isn't that good news? Isn't that worth celebrating today? So if you can. If you come to him. You can come back into relationship with God. And go to heaven one day.

[ 16 : 50 ] All because. Of our real superhero. Who came to save us. And that's what we're celebrating today. That's why we go and open presents. And that's why we meet with our families.

And have food. And have a good time. We're remembering the superhero. Who came to save us. And what he did for us. But there's one more thing. That you need to know this morning. Before I finish. You know.

Boys and girls. How with superheroes. In comics or movies. Often people. Around them. Don't actually know. That they're superheroes. Like. Like people. Didn't know that Clark Kent.

Is actually Superman. He is. Trust me. I've read the comics. Or they didn't know that Bruce Wayne. Is actually. Who's Bruce Wayne? Batman. Yeah.

Because they got these. These identities. And people don't recognize them. For who they are. Well you know what the Bible says. About Jesus. Also in John chapter 1. That Adrian read for us earlier. It says.

[ 17 : 44 ] Although he came into the world. The world did not. Recognize him. And today. Lots of people. Still don't recognize. Our superhero.

They don't believe. Who he really is. And so they don't follow him. And they never come back to God. And they spend their whole life. And eternity. Separated from God. Which is so sad.

Jesus came. So that you don't have to be. Separated from God. And so I hope this morning. That you recognize. Who Jesus really is. And that he came to do.

What you can't do. To bring you to God. And I hope. You decide to follow him. This Christmas. And come back. Come back to church. Don't make. Coming to church. A once a year thing. Join us. As we meet on Sundays. Because. When we meet on Sundays. We open God's word. We listen to what he says. We take time out. To listen to our creator. And we learn more about Jesus. [ 18 : 42 ] And what it means. To follow him. So join us. We love having visitors. Every Sunday. 930. To discover more. About Jesus. And what he's done for us. And how to follow him. And in the meantime. I hope.

That you have a super Christmas. Celebrating. The best gift. That God has ever given. Which is. Our superhero. His son. Jesus. So let's pray. Lord. Thank you so much. For reminding us. In your word. That Jesus came. To win. Where we lost. Jesus came. To defeat. Our enemy. Thank you. Lord. For sending your son. To represent us. And to go on. And die. On the cross. For our sins. To bring us. Back to you. Help us. As we celebrate Christmas. This morning. And today. Help us. To follow Jesus. Help us. To really. Celebrate. What Jesus has. Done for us. As we trust in him. Our king. Our savior. And our superhero. Thank you so much. [ 19 : 38 ] Amen.