**Temptation**

Based on [Matthew 4:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt4.1-11)

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Lenten Midweek 1

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The season of Lent is a penitential season, that means it is a season of repentance and sorrow over sins. **But even more generally, Lent is about the very real struggle against evil, which includes the daily reality of temptation.** The Forty days of Lent are in remembrance of Jesus’ temptation, forty days and nights fasting in the wilderness and being tempted by the devil.

We face temptation every day: We are tempted to frustration, anxiety, covetousness, to despising those who annoy us or even those who do us harm. **We are tempted to neglect God…to believe God doesn’t answer prayers for ourselves and others.** These temptations are strategically sent to us by the devil, but they are permitted us as tests from God for our good (Job 2:6), to strengthen our faith and cause us by the Sprit to cling even more firmly to Jesus Christ.

God tempts no one. That means he doesn’t lie or deceive us. But he does test us, to see how we handle evil when it comes our way and to purify our faith like silver is purified in a refiner’s fire (Zechariah 13:9).

It’s tempting to think such testing and trials are cruel and unfair. But Scripture reminds us that every good Father disciplines his children--teaches them--and teaching involves testing. **Also consider that God has prepared for us a room in his heavenly mansion, and whatever loss we suffer in this life, whatever suffering and struggle is not easy, but it is also not worth comparing to the glory that awaits us in heaven.** Because Christ has paid for our sins with his blood, both our successes and failures in facing temptation have only temporary consequences, not eternal ones. We can always rest assured we will receive the crown of eternal life—so long as we do not give up the struggle-- and will be delivered once and for all from this veil of tears to our Father in heaven.

Scripture also tells us that no one has suffered any temptation that is not common to man (1 Cor. 10:13). There may be different intensities of temptation, but they are common to everyone in kind. **People living in third world poverty can be happy and appreciative of every day; people living in plenty can be depressed and thankless, trapped in the prison of covetousness.** No matter the intensity of the temptation, or whether the struggle is spiritual or physical poverty God’s promise is for everyone. His remedy is for us to take hold of his Son Jesus Christ for our rest, for our assurance, and for our final deliverance from all evil.

Jesus Christ was sent by his Father to be for us. He is our advocate before God the Father. Temptations come to us every day, and it’s not easy. **It’s a struggle…a struggle that can get easier through discipline, or more difficult through constant indulgence. In either case—whether your faith is strong or your faith is weak—we know that we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment.**

Jesus knows our struggles, and stands before God in our place and pleads for us. He said to Peter, “Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus knows you and what you go through, and he is a priest for you. Scripture says, “**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but, who himself was tempted everyway and is yet without sin**”.

In about his 30th year, Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. When Adam and Eve were tempted they sinned; when Jesus was tempted he resisted and overcame. **And He did not overcome temptation by any special power or help from God that is not available to us.** He overcame temptation by quoting what God has written, the very same written Word we have. And God protected him, sent Angels to minister to him, even as he sends help to you.

Jesus perfectly overcame the temptation of the devil. And by believing in him, his victory is our victory. **Wherever we fail, we know that he has already succeeded; and his victory is worth infinitely more to the Heavenly Father than all our defeats.** Jesus gathers us into his arms like mother hen gathers her chicks. And we have healing in his wings, as his arms were spread out in the cross to shelter us from the temporal and eternal punishment our sins deserve.

We cannot by our own strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to him. But the same Spirit that drove him into the wilderness also drives us through temptation into his arms.

Temptations cannot *keep us away* from Jesus, but they can ***lead us away*** from Him. When we nurture hatred, lust, envy, resentment, we reject God’s instruction and leave no room for the Sprit to work his miracle of faith. “**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit**” (Ephesians 4:30). Instead pray in this way: “Heavenly Father, lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

In all your earthly trials, do not doubt or sin, but have courage and comfort yourself in the wounds of Christ. Draw near to God, he will draw near to you (James 4:8). And salvation is closer now than when you first believed.

Until that day comes, fight the good fight of faith. Do not give the devil a foothold. **Put on the new self, restored in the image of God, through Jesus Christ who is your righteousness. In baptism, you were crucified with him, and through the Spirit you are raised to walk with him.** Do not fear evil, trust in the Lord your God who promises, “**Neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**