

Lenten Sermon Series: “Teach Us to Pray” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – Holy Thursday, 4/1/2010

Title: “Lead Us Not into Temptation”

Text: Matthew 26:40-46

Intro.: *Illus.: Bee or Butterfly temptation skills*

Theme: Finding temptation is not a small past time or hobby but takes our full intention and has received the full resources of our Lord and Savior to help us win in our life and death battle for the spiritual high

Recognizing the face of temptation

- Temptation often does not come in the face of a demon but in the familiar
 1. Disciples had been to this prayer place before, many times, and forgot the lesson and discounted brewing trial
 2. Checked out in worship, lagging in devotional time, rusty in prayer, careless in associations, temptation sneaks in
- Temptation often comes to us when we are at a weak moment (**41 & 43**)
 1. The disciples were emotionally and physically exhausted and didn’t realize that they were spiritually exhausted too
 - a. *The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. vs. 41*
 2. Often we put our spiritual condition 3rd or 4th behind job, kids, health, or even play, exposing our flank to Satan
 - a. *So, people who think they are standing firmly should be careful that they don't fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12*
- Temptation often gives us forewarning so we don’t just not fall into it—“*don’t begin to enter temptation*” (**vs. 41**)
 1. *“You can’t stop temptations any more than you can stop birds from flying over your head; however, you don’t have to let them make a nest in your hair.” Martin Luther*

Remembering to be alert at all times

- Watch – not just as a one time activity but as an ongoing daily spiritual awareness
 1. *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8*
 2. **Illus.: Letting your guard down**
 3. Tonight, as we prepare to receive the Meal, we do a spiritual systems check to root out impenitence, pet’s sin, guilt
- Pray – pray about everything—evil and blessings/trials and rest times – pray for discernment of how to handle
 1. Where better place could the disciples be than with Jesus and in his favorite place to prayer? Satan not selective
 2. Prayer not a rabbit’s foot to ward off evil spirits—it is connecting into God’s presence from which Satan must flee
 - a. *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down. Revelation 12:10*
 - b. As you come to the meal claim Jesus’ “real presence with you” as you go back out in your life to battle sin

Rising to meet the temptation with our Savior at our side

- By his Spirit not my spirit (*The spirit is willing, but the body is weak vs. 41*).
 1. 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6
 2. Good intentions or self confident actions don’t cut it in our fight against temptation
 - a. **Illus.: The power of temptation to swamp you**
 - b. *Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:12-13*
- Christ gives us the Lord’s Supper through which we receive his Spirit of power
 1. *Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. . .The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. John 6:57, 63*
 2. When you come to the Lord’s Supper, tonight, Jesus is united with you in Word, Spirit, and Power to help you live
 - a. Your greatest temptation fighting asset is not your will or intention or plan but taking Jesus with you
 - b. No matter what temptation you face, because of Jesus commitment to you to be by your side, you will win
 - c. *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13*

Bee or Butterfly anti-temptation skills

Temptation is always seductive, and so we can hardly have too many reminders of Satan's purpose in it. Last week I had a simple reminder. I was at a party over lunch with a dozen of my fellow workers. It was a warm, Chicago day in early September, and we had the windows open wide. Soon a bee found its way in, and after buzzing near me it landed on some food on the table. One of my colleagues a few chairs away took hold of an empty bottle of sparkling grape juice and put the mouth of the bottle near the bee. When she did that, I expected the bee to be startled and fly away for its own safety, as a butterfly might do. Instead, without a moment's hesitation, the bee flew to the mouth of the bottle as if it had done this a hundred times before and climbed inside the narrow opening. Immediately my colleague put the cap on the bottle and screwed it shut. The bee spent the rest of our party drinking at the bottom of the bottle. As far as I know, the bee was never released. What was my colleague's purpose in luring the bee into the bottle? Was she concerned about the bee, wanting it to enjoy our hospitality and have plenty to drink? No, she dislikes bees. Her purpose was capture and control. The bee had flown into a trap. When Satan incites us to indulge in the pleasures of the world in a manner that oversteps God's commands, what is his purpose? Is he concerned that we might miss out on the good things of God? No, he despises humans. His purpose is capture and control. We must never forget that when we follow him, we walk into a trap. When the Tempter comes around, it is better to have the instincts of a butterfly than a bee. **Craig Brian Larson, editor of PreachingToday**

Letting Your Guard Down

On January 14, 2005, Shane Maixner died in an avalanche. The 27-year-old and four of his friends drove to the Canyons ski resort outside Park City, Utah, rode the ski lift, hiked up to the backcountry gate outside the Dutch Draw area, went through the gate posted with warning signs, and started snowboarding. On the second trip down the same slopes, someone in the party shouted, "Avalanche!" but Shane could not escape. Two days later, they dug his body out of the snow. Some of the media severely criticized the "reckless out-of-bounds riders," picturing Shane as a novice unaware of the possible dangers. But that isn't the true story. Maixner and two others in his party were "avalanche-certified backcountry guides." The men owned special avalanche gear, but didn't bring it with them when they went to Dutch Draw. This is not an unusual occurrence. In fact, "skiers with the most avalanche training are more likely to be seduced into faulty reasoning by factors like tracked slopes and group enthusiasm. "Maixner didn't die because he was a fool. Like his friends, he was lulled into letting his guard down." **Ted De Hass, Bedford, Iowa; sources: Grayson Schaffer, "Powder Keg," Outside (April, 2005) pp 32-33**

The Power of Temptation to Swamp You

In 1999, for the first time in 47 years, local fishermen discovered that tuna were running only thirty miles off Cape Cod, Massachusetts. And they were biting! You didn't have to be a professional to catch them; all you needed was a sharp hook and some bait. And the rewards for doing so were substantial. Rumor had it that Japanese buyers were willing to pay \$50,000 for a large blue-fin. As a result, many ignored Coast Guard warnings and headed out to sea in small, unequipped boats. What these new fishermen didn't realize was that the problem is not catching a tuna—it's getting them into the boat. On September 23, the *Christi Anne*, a 19-foot boat, capsized while doing battle with a tuna. That same day, the 27-foot boat *Basic Instinct* suffered the same fate, while *Official Business*, a 28-footer, was swamped after it hooked onto a 600-pound tuna. The tuna simply pulled it underwater. These fishermen underestimated the power of the fish they were trying to catch. Temptation, likewise, can blindside you. A small indiscretion appears to be worth the risk. But, as with a hooked tuna, only after we hook into temptation do we discover its true strength. **Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham (Zondervan, 2005), pp. 59-60**

Matthew 26:40-46

⁴⁰Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.

⁴¹"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

⁴²He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

⁴³When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" [NIV]