

Lead us not to temptation

John 10:11-18

April 25, 2021

Today is the 7th Sunday, the last Sunday to meditate on the Lord's Prayer. We have been meditating the Lord's Prayer line by line since February 21. Today, we pay attention to the last petition Jesus taught us to pray. "Lead us not to temptation but deliver us from evil"

Jesus taught us to pray for provision—Give us this day our daily bread. Jesus taught us to pray for forgiveness—Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Now he taught us to pray for DELIVERANCE—Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

"Lead us not into temptation" is exactly the same as "deliver us from evil." The two petitions mean exactly the same.

A minister parked his car in a No Parking Zone and left this note on the windshield: "I've circled the block ten times and cannot find a parking place. If I do not park here, I will miss my appointment. 'Forgive us our trespasses.'" When the minister returned there was a ticket on his windshield along with this note: "I've been circling this block for ten years. If I don't give you a ticket, I will lose my job. 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

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"Lead us not to temptation and deliver us from evil."

First of all, we find one truth from this petition. That is we all are tempted all the time to be against God and our neighbors and ourselves.

Paul says in his letter to Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:13), "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone." Eugene Peterson put it this way: "No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face." Which means, we are surrounded by temptation who keeps coming our way.

You might hear this prayer: "So far today, God, I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been grumpy, nasty, or selfish. I'm really glad about that, but, God, in a few minutes I'm going to get out of bed and from then on, I'm going to need a lot of help." Jesus knew we need a lot of help and so taught us to pray to God the Father in heaven, for not leading us to temptation but delivering us from evil.

Have you heard about the 7 deadly sins? In 600 A.D. Gregory the Great said there are seven deadly sins from which all our struggles stem: Envy, Greed, Gluttony, Anger, Sloth, Lust and Pride

Envy is displeasure at the good of another. It is a lot easier to weep with those who weep than to rejoice with those who rejoice.

Greed is an excessive pursuit of material goods and money, power, prestige, perks.

Gluttony is addictions to eating and drinking. Appetites that go unrestrained.

Anger or wrath is a strong anger and hate towards another person. Rage, resentment, bitterness. Getting even instead of getting over. Hate crime is of our great concern in our country these days.

Sloth is an excessive laziness or the failure to act and utilize one's talents. "I don't care" attitude about all of life.

Lust is love distorted by turning people into things and using them for selfish gain.

Pride is superiority. Considering ourselves better than others. Discrimination based on skin color, sexual orientation, nationality, race, economic status, physical condition is a sign of pride

We all are likely to be tempted to do consciously and unconsciously. So we need to pray to God, the Deliverer, "Lead us not to temptation. Deliver us from Pride to Humility, from Lust to Self-control, from Gluttony to Temperance, from Greed to love, from Sloth to Diligence, from Anger to Patience and from Envy to Kindness.

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"Lead us not to temptation."

This prayer reminds us of Jesus who was tempted in the wilderness right after the baptism at the Jordan River. Matthew 4 portrayed how Jesus encountered the temptation and overcame it.

He got three temptations: The first one was to turn stones into bread. The second was to become king over all nations of the earth. The third one was to jump off from the top of the temple to show off. And he countered them with the following three responses.

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Do not put the Lord your God to a test. Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

All these three responses have to do with remembering God who is in charge.

The temptation Jesus got is to forget God who is in charge. Jesus was tempted by Satan to forget about God who is in charge and has plans for him. "Forget God. You are the center of the world. It is about your life. You can do it by yourself and for yourself. You can get all the things you need to act like a god." Which means not trusting that God has plans for the world and for your life.

Aren't we tempted to live this way? Don't we put our trust in our ability and plans, thinking that we are in control of our lives? Therefore if our plans do not go as planned and hoped, then we think we become frustrated and we even yell at God "Why don't you care about me?"

Just like Peter. Jesus announced to the disciples that he is about to go to Jerusalem, to suffer and to die. Peter turns to Jesus and says, "God forbid that this should ever happen." Why? Not because he concerned about Jesus' safety, but because that interrupts Peter's plans. "No way. You shouldn't!" Jesus turns to Peter, and says, "Get behind me Satan!" That is exactly what he said to the devil in his temptations.

When I began serving in Huntington UMC in Ct about 20 years ago, I faced an overwhelmingly difficult situation. One of the church staff embezzled more than \$20,000. It was my first appointment to serve as senior pastor. I was in my early 40's, young and inexperienced. I did not know what to do and how to do as a pastor. Surely many nights went by without sleep. "Why me? Why this?"

One morning I went to my church office. On the way I went to the sanctuary to pray. "Why me, Lord? Why this, Lord?" I cried out to the Lord with tears in my eyes. Then, guess what. I saw the big wooden cross on the front wall of the sanctuary moving and coming toward me. It looked like Jesus coming to me with his two hands wide open. Then I heard him whispering to me, "Kun Sam, stop worrying. Don't you know this is my church? This is my church, not yours."

Let me honest. I have planned about my future. I planned to do stay for 4 or 5 more years at Fairfield Grace and retire at age 65 or 66. A smart plan. Isn't it? It seemed to be a perfect plan for me and my wife. Yes, I have tried to take charge of my life and ministry. So, I was perplexed and at a loss when I received a call from the bishop's office for a new appointment last month, exactly on Tuesday, March 16. "Why now?" "Why me to Asbury?" It was not in my future plan. It was against my well-carved plan. After the appointment was announced, for a good three weeks, I woke up in the middle of night to find myself wrestling with all the new things I have to face at a new church. "Why me? Why now? Why there? Lord."

God's answer to me is "Why not you? Why not now?"

Lead me not to temptation. Help me not to forget you who are in charge of my life and ministry. Lead us not to temptation. Help us not to forget God is in charge of our life, our church and our world.

So we sing together this morning,

Change my heart oh God

Make it ever true

Change my heart oh God

May I be like You

You are the potter

I am the clay

Mold me and make me

This is what I pray

Change my heart oh God

Make it ever true

Change my heart oh God

May I be like You