

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



February 26, 2023

TEMPTATION

what is within our power?

by Drew Downs

There's a way we talk about temptation. We construct it as an all-consuming force we are powerless against.

We also construct it as a matter of fortitude and will. We may be tempted, but some (good) character within us makes us *strong enough* to overcome it.

A lot of what I've read about the brain suggests that desire and will power aren't

really like that. It is all a kind of internal logic within our brains.

Resisting temptation isn't a super power. It's more about setting yourself up for success. Being intentional, working together, and changing mindset.

Resisting temptation *is* about power. Not the power you have, but the power we share to do the right thing.

LENT

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

The Invitation

From the Ash Wednesday liturgy:

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

With love,
Drew

LENT

2023

FOR SUNDAY

The First Sunday in Lent

February 26, 2023

Collect

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

LENT

Reflection

We call this the Temptation in the Wilderness. Probably because the text says that's what's happening here. That the Tempter is tempting Jesus.

But is Jesus really tempted? I'm not sure. And it certainly doesn't say he actually was.

In one sense, this doesn't matter. This is a story about the Tempter doing the tempting. Whether it works or not doesn't deny that tempting is going on.

And yet, that's not how we usually talk about temptation.

We live in a "Buyer Beware" culture in which temptation is *expected*, so it is up to the individual to resist. In other words, the emphasis of the *action* is on *resisting* temptation, rather than the one tempting another person.

Jesus doesn't seem all that tempted, however. He rebuffs every advance. He makes it clear that he doesn't see things the way the Tempter does. And shortcuts to power don't really sound like something he'd be interested in taking.

In the context of the story, the Temptation in the Wilderness reflects, not Jesus's power to resist the desire for power, but his faith in God making such personal power undesirable. Jesus doesn't put God to the test, not *just* because there's a rule against it, but because his faith tells him that it doesn't work that way.

Taking power, exerting it over other people, making them do things they don't want to do: that isn't faith.

We aren't tempted by power because we're weak. We're tempted because we think it makes sense (*We could do so much good!*). To Jesus, however, it is a rejection of the entire project.

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