

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church

March 4, 2018

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The Lord's Prayer (Part 5)

'And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.'

The Lord's Prayer is found only in Matthew and Luke's Gospels. The one we pray is the *King James Version* of Matthew's account. Today we come to this petition;

Matthew 6:13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."(KJV)

The NRSV reads; *"And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." (NRSV)*

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You've probably heard the saying, *God will not put on you more than you can bear.*

That's not actually in the Bible. What is in the Bible is;

God is faithful and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may endure it. (I Cor. 10:13)

In the *Letter of James* we find;

No one, when tempted, should say, 'I am being tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:13-15)

God would not intentionally *"lead us into temptation,"* but life will bring us some trials and temptations. It happens to all of us.

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Even Jesus, the Son of God, faced trials and temptations. He was **first** tempted to turn stones into bread. That may sound like an odd temptation to us, but to him it was the temptation to be the Messiah by feeding people's appetites.

'They'll follow you, if you give them what they want and need.'

But there would be no salvation for humanity if Jesus had yielded to this temptation to gain popularity by supplying our every want and need. God is not amazon.com.

His **second** temptation was to stand on the pinnacle on the temple and throw himself down to put God to the test. But what kind of Messiah, or Savior would that be? Does God exist to display mighty acts of power to us? God is not a genie in a bottle.

His **third** temptation was to worship the wrong thing.

'All you've got to do, Jesus, is change your focus of worship and all these kingdoms will be yours. The end justifies the means. Right?'

But the end doesn't justify the means. There would be no salvation for humanity had Jesus compromised.

All of those temptations had to be tempting or else they were just suggestions. In other words, Jesus had to consider each of these as real possibilities. He had to struggle with them, or it wasn't really temptation. By its very nature, temptation is a battle. Jesus shared a human life with us. He knows about trials and temptations. He provides the power for us to overcome our trials and temptations, as he overcame his.

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Some tests in life come in fast and hard. Others start out small. We don't always see them coming. Evil doesn't announce itself. It's illusive. Sometimes it even seems rational. It may actually look good. But evil always wears a mask.

The serpent asked Eve,

'Did God say, "You shall not eat from every tree in the garden" ?' (Genesis 3:1)

It's just a simple question. *"Is that really what God said? Is there something wrong with this particular fruit? Seems fine to me."* It often starts as a small conversation in your head.

But small doors can open to large rooms. Cracks can become gorges. Streams become rivers. Evil is deceptive. It wouldn't be temptation if it didn't at some point look good. We become numb, or desensitized to evil around and within us. We normalize it. Accept it. Allow it. And it grows and develops until it destroys.

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How many have fallen during their times of testing? It happens in the world of **business**. It happens in the **Church**. It happens in **politics, education, and health care**. Trials show up everywhere; in the **home, sports, the military, and even law enforcement**. Being **successful** in life can be a trial or temptation. Success can lure us off into a world of self-serving entitlement. Is that really success, or is it greed? Evil wears a mask.

Such trials are not overcome simply by higher levels of *education*. Highly educated people can, and often do fail these tests. Nor do the trials in life care how much *money* you have in the bank. One does not pass these tests because they are physically *strong* or from a good *family*. Our pedigree doesn't save us from these trials.

Jesus is pointing to our Achilles heel in this prayer,

'And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.' (Matt. 6:13 NRSV)

It's an admission of our dependency upon God, which is at the core of all prayer. That's what prayer is. It's an admission of our need of God.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

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In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Congregation: **Amen**