

Title: And lead us not into temptation
Text: Luke 11.4c
Theme: Forgiveness chokes the weed of temptation
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: Forgiveness received and offered helps break the power of temptation.

Read Text:

Jesus taught his disciples to pray because they watched him pray and wanted to learn to do it. So he taught them how to pray with this prayer that covers the kinds of things we need to pray about because we need to be concerned about them and we need the Lord's help with them. We need to long for God to be known as Father and that his name is revered and worshipped all over the earth. We need to live on our tiptoes anticipating the coming of the kingdom of God and when earth and heaven are one. We need to live every day aware of our dependence on God for bread (physical needs) and aware of our need to staying current with God which means confessing our sins and seeking his forgiveness. Jesus taught that when we identify and deal with the beam in our own eye, then we are able to help others with the speck in theirs. Seeking and granting forgiveness is ultimately about healing a wound in the body. When a wound goes untreated, we all lose. When a wound is healed, we all win. Seeking and granting forgiveness is an opportunity to reflect how deeply the gospel has gripped your heart.

Then Jesus tells us to pray, "*And lead us not into temptation.*" At first glance, this request strikes me as a bit odd. If you have heard the Lord's prayer many times and have said it many times, then you are used to the words. But familiarity does not always mean understanding. What does Jesus mean when he tells us to pray, "*And lead us not into temptation?*"

1. What does "lead us not into temptation" mean?

Look at Luke 22.39-40. (read)

Jesus tells the disciples to "*pray that you may not enter into temptation.*" Another text that sheds some light on this is in v.31, where Jesus is warning Peter and says, "*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.*" Here Jesus is the one praying for Peter who was about to face a serious event, which of course he did. In both of these passages there is an emphasis upon 1) being aware of the danger one is facing or about to face and 2) being prepared to respond to it in faith.

Everyday we battle sin within and without. John Owen said either be killing sin or sin will be killing you. Paul said, "I die daily." I have to consider my position in Christ seriously (dead to sin and alive to God). I do not do that perfectly, yet, but I want to live that way faithfully now. Just because sin calls me, beckons me, entices me to respond does not mean I have to respond. I do not have to sin. God will use events to test us so that we can see what is in our hearts and so we can see how much we need him and so that we will just learn to trust him no matter what.

Those events are not designed by God to cause us to sin. God does not tempt us with evil as James says. When, in that moment, I fail to lean on God, it feels like temptation and it is temptation, but that temptation is not from God, that is from my own heart.

Every battle is an opportunity to grow in grace by depending on God, or to fall on my face by depending on myself or giving in. Imagine that you are going skiing and the ski lift takes you up to very peak of the mountain. There you have a choice. You can ski down the right side or the left side of the mountain. The right side is the side with the trails and slopes that lead you back down to the lodge. The left side leads to a precipice. Same mountain, but depending on which side you ski will determine two radically different outcomes.

The peak of that mountain is the event you are about to face. When you are prepared to face it with faith, depending on God for his grace, then the event is a trial that deepens you and strengthens you. If you are not prepared and you either fail to take the warnings seriously, or you fail to humble yourself and lean on God for grace, then this event is a temptation that cause havoc. Same event, trial or temptation?

So, we are to pray daily so that we are looking at every event as an opportunity to grow and as a danger to avoid. We are to be in regular communication with God (walking and talking with God) so that when my heart is enticed by a promise that sin is making, that my communication with God helps me unmask the lie.

When I was in the early stages of teaching my kids how to drive, I would try to say everything that I was thinking as I was driving. Such as, "The light is about to turn green but before I accelerate, I am looking to see if anyone is trying to run the light. Ahead I see that car moving slower than everyone else and I am wondering if the driver is okay. I'm accelerating now, but on the sidewalk is a kid on a bike who could lose his balance, so I want to be mindful of him even while this person on my left seems to be gunning to cut in front of me, or is on their phone and putting on mascara so may not even see me..." That is what walking with God is like. "God, I am feeling a little anxious and overwhelmed today. I'm not really sure why, but something feels a little off. It may be me, but I want to trust in your promises to provide all that I need to today and not be owned by my fears and anxious thoughts. I know that you are my Father and will provide what I need. I know that you are working all things according to your plan and I want to see how I can be part of that today. I am tempted to rehearse how hurt I was yesterday by what this family member said to me or about me. I am tempted to take things into my own hand, so please help me see if there is any truth to what they said and own my part in the problem and humbly and honestly address that. Help me to be a peacemaker today. Help me to learn from this and become more like you instead of being quick to defend myself and causing more problems. Lord, that driver up there is really aggressive. Maybe there is an emergency they are responding to. If so, give them grace. If they are just being out of control, protect the other drivers...."

Prayer is not a brief shout-out before we eat a meal. It is the Our life with God is the game and these petitions are categories or lanes for us to pray in. And by being in regular communication

with God, we have the eyes to see the events in our days as opportunities for growth and good, instead of temptations.

2. **How are we lead into temptation?**

Do you see the connection between this petition in the prayer and the previous one? We are led into temptation when we fail to address sin. So, how are we lead into temptation? Again, Jesus tells us to daily ask for forgiveness because we need to. We need to realize that sin is always present and ready to take us down and out. We are led into temptation

A. **By failing to take sin's power, desire and destiny seriously.**

Have you ever been driving when you realized that the road has become a sheet of ice? You slow down, put both hands on the wheel, and navigate very carefully. We are led into temptation when we fail to recognize the danger we are in, all the time. This happened to Peter. Jesus warned him about what he was about to face and he argued with Jesus saying that he would never deny him. Peter thought he was stronger than he really was. If David, a man after God's heart was capable of doing what he did, and Peter, the rock was capable of doing what he did, who are we to think that we are above certain sins and temptations? We are led into temptation when we fail to recognize that we are walking on ice. This is a prayer by which we are casting ourselves onto God, and confessing that we cannot trust ourselves.

B. **By failing to believe God's promise to satisfy us.**

Child psychologists have used the marshmallow test to predict a child's success rate. A group of children were each given a marshmallow and told not to eat it. The researchers then left the room, leaving the children unsupervised for a bit. Predictably, some of the eats ate, while others waited. The conclusion was that those who resisted the temptation to eat the marshmallow would have greater success in life. One researcher conducted a similar experiment with a different twist on it. The children in this experiment were each given a marshmallow and told that if they waited to eat it until the adults returned that they would be rewarded with some art supplies. When the adults returned, the children who delayed gratification were grouped together, but only half of them received art supplies. The others were not rewarded and were lied to. The researchers then did the same experiment again and promised art supplies to those who waited. This time the children who originally waited, but were not given art supplies as promised, went ahead and ate the marshmallow, while those who were rewarded with art supplies, had reason to believe that a reward was coming and they waited again.

The heart of every temptation is belief vs. unbelief. Do you believe in the promise of the temptation (gratification) or you do you believe in the promise of God (ultimate satisfaction)? We pray so that we can remember what to believe and not believe. Believing God's goodness and greatness to act on his goodness is part of the "way of escape."

C. **By failing to deal with sin.** (Ephesians 4.27-29)

When we fail to take sin seriously, we will be deceived by sin and when we are trapped, or realize our guilt, it is easy to give up and give in which leads to more entrapment. That is why it is so important that we are regularly confessing our sins and embracing God's forgiveness. But it is also important that we don't let the sins of others against remain unaddressed to the point that we can. When we think we have been sinned against, we can give into self-pity, or think that we are permitted some sin because we have been wronged, or we just become blind by our own bitterness. So, in conclusion I want to give you some questions to consider when you think you have been sinned against. This will help you not be led into temptation.

- Is it really a sin?

There is a difference between being hurt and being sinned against. Start by asking if what happened is really a sin. Let's say that the son of some friends of yours got married and you were not invited to the wedding and you feel hurt. Now, I am not denying the hurt at all. But did your friends sin against you? No! That is not sin.

- Do I have all the facts?

Another question to ask: Do I have all the facts? Proverbs 18.13 says, "*If one gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame.*" There is so much hurt that can be avoided if we will take the time to get all of the information. When we assume that we know it all, then we make judgments based upon those assumptions. That is when things can really go sideways. *Is it possible that there is more to this than what I know?* Again, that is why we should be quick to listen and slow to speak.

- Is this really my problem?

Maybe you do not have a dog in the fight. Maybe this is not your problem. I am not permitted to pick up the offense of another person. If a friend tells you how someone slighted or offended them. What is your response? Take sides? No! Punish the person who hurt your friend? No! Your response is to challenge your friend to address this. In fact, if your friend attempts to tell you what happened, you ought to stop your friend from telling you everything. Your friend needs to handle this the way God tells us to. *Does this situation really involve me? Who are the responsible parties?* If I try to grab on to something that is not mine, then I am giving sin and Satan a foothold in my life which leads me into temptation. I am tempted to play judge, jury and executioner.

- Should I let love cover this?

1 Peter 4.8 says, "*Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*" In other words, I do not need to confront and correct people about everything. If that were the case, then that is just about all that we would be doing. If the issue is something that is hindering our fellowship (bugging me and I can't get beyond it) or it is hurting the other person, then I need to address it. Seriously, if I am preaching the gospel to myself, then I am

looking for reasons to be gracious and NOT looking for reasons to be offended. By the way, not everything is a sin.

- How should I respond?

Jesus calls us to pray about this on a regular basis because this is going to happen to us on a regular basis. People are not only going to sin against you, but you are going to sin against others. Expect people to offend you. It is going to happen. Expect people in the church to offend you. It is going to happen. Expect me to offend you; it is my spiritual gift (not really). The issue is not WILL you be sinned against or WILL you sin against others, but how do you respond when it happens. Be prepared so that you are not led into temptation.

Scenarios:

- 1) **How should I respond when I am asked to forgive someone who has sinned against me?**

In a charitable way find out specifically what the other person is asking forgiveness for. You cannot forgive a generality. For example, here is how not to ask forgiveness: *"If I have ever offended you, then I am sorry."* What do you say to that? The logical response would be, *"If you have, then it's ok."* What just happened? Nothing! There was no confession of sin. And there was no promise of forgiveness. Without the promise of forgiveness, you have no basis to build a relationship. Therefore, in order for you to offer forgiveness, the other person has to make a confession.

These conversations are difficult. We know that something needs to be said, and most of us are not good at saying it. So, be charitable when a person is attempting to ask forgiveness. At the same time you need clarity so that you know what it is that you are being asked to forgive. You could say something such as, *"I am so glad we are having this conversation and I desire to get this matter resolved. So, what is it exactly that you are asking me to forgive, because this is important to you and to me and I do not want there to be any more misunderstanding."* So, when they say what it is, now you are able to say, (and you should say) "I forgive you." I would suggest that you add, *"And do you know what I mean by that? When I say that I forgive you, I am saying that I will not bring this up behind your back or to your face for your hurt. God has forgiven me in Christ and I am free to be able to forgive others."*

After confession has been made and forgiveness offered, then, look for the earliest possible opportunity to enjoy the reconciliation. That may mean that you go out of your way to say hi, or to have a conversation, but be intentional about putting the forgiveness into practice.

- 2) **How am I to respond when someone has sinned against me and they have not asked for my forgiveness?**

Can I forgive someone who sinned against me, but who never asks for forgiveness? Should I forgive them if they never ask for it? Does God forgive people who never ask for it? If God forgave people without confession and repentance, then why does Jesus warn people about hell?

Can you forgive someone who has sinned against you but has never asked for it? Not really, in the sense that you cannot make a promise to not bring the matter up, when the matter has not been resolved. True forgiveness sets the stage for reconciliation. You cannot begin the process of reconciling a relationship when the matter that broke the relationship has not been dealt with. God never calls you to have “pretend” relationships. God does not expect you to act as if everything is fine, when everything is not fine. So, no, you are not expected to forgive the offender, however, (and this is a big however), you should be ready to forgive the person. In other words, you need to have forgiven them in your heart, and are awaiting the opportunity to forgive them in person. If you are not asking God to prepare your heart to be ready to forgive them, then you will simply become bitter and that will lead you into temptation.

So, how am I to respond when someone has sinned against me and they have not asked for my forgiveness? I need to go to that person and speak to them about it because I care more about them than I do myself. I am not going to win, to get revenge, or prove a point. This is why we pray about this sort of thing all of the time. I need God’s help to care more about their need in sinning than I do my hurt of being sinned against. When I go to the person, I need to go humbly. I need to ask if there is anything I have done to contribute to the strain in our relationship. I need to consider what they say, if they suggest a few things. Then you need to let that person know what is bothering you. I have found that when I ask the other person permission to share something, it tends to go much better. For example, I will say something such as: “Would you let me share something with you and still be my friend?” When they give you permission, then you can tell them about the matter that has created a breach in your relationship and tell them that you believe that they wronged you and need to ask forgiveness, and that forgiveness is something that you are ready to grant so that you guys can go forward and lay this to rest.

3) How am I to respond when someone has sinned against me and they ask for forgiveness, but I do not think that they mean it?

Why do you doubt their sincerity? There may be a track record of lying and you do not trust. There may be no evidence of repentance. Repentance is not just feeling bad and saying that you are sorry. Repentance involves the changing of mind and direction. So, if a person refuses to change, then their repentance was not valid and the whole deal is blown up. If you sell someone a car and they pay for the car in cash. That is fine, unless the cash is counterfeit. If the cash is counterfeit, then just because you shook hands and gave them the keys, does not mean that they now own the vehicle. The transaction is rendered null and void because they were not honest. So, we are to be ready to forgive but if the person reveals that they are not truly repenting but are trying to manipulate you with their confession, then they have essentially voided the whole deal.

Forgiveness is the grease that eliminates the natural friction that occurs when more there are two more people together for any length of time, particularly in a church and in a family. But, forgiveness that truly chooses not to remember, and that functions with an atmosphere of grace can only happen as long as the gospel is continually front and center in our lives. We must consistently return to the gospel. That is why I need to pray like this. I need God's help to think this way so I can respond this way in order to treat others as a reflection of how I have been treated. Believing the promise of God's forgiveness and being merciful (letting go of "my right to revenge" or to be the judge, jury and executioner) breaks the hold that sin can get on me.

Every day is an opportunity to grow in grace or stumble in sin. My response to the event determines whether it will be a test that deepens my faith or a temptation that causes me and perhaps others to stumble. This prayer is part of my preparation for my response to the event.