

June 28, 2020
How to Handle Temptation?

Scripture reading: Luke 4:1-13

Text: James 1:12

A little boy was standing near a display of all kinds of lollipops at a corner store. The grocer saw the little boy acting on a strange way. So he asked him: *"What are you up to?"* *"Nothing,"* replied the boy. *"Nothing? Well it looks to me as if you were trying to take some of those lollipops?"* *"You're wrong, mister,"* –the boy replied, *"I'm trying not to."*

We can all relate to giving in to similar kind of temptation. In fact, temptation is part of our everyday lives, and we know that if we give in and let temptation to win then there will be unfortunate consequences.

Our passage today talks about that Jesus was not exempt from temptation either. When we picture Christ in our minds many times we forget that He was a man, a human being, too. He was 100% man, and 100% God. As a man, as a human being He felt, He experienced just like you and me. He ate, drank, slept, got dirty and needed a bath, He prayed, He cried, got tired, and quite a few times He got angry. Jesus did and experienced all the things you and I experience in this life...including temptations, too.

In our story we find that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil after He had fasted for forty days. Forty days without food in a solitary wilderness, I think that is the place that we would certainly avoid. The devil knew it when to tempt Jesus. He knew how to offer the easy and quick way out in the time of need and difficulty. Many of us are tempted by the devil during those times, since he knows when we are the most vulnerable, when we are tired, frustrated, hungry...or we are just bored.

The devil tempted Jesus three times. First he said this, *"Oh Jesus. You must be so hungry. Why don't you turn these rocks into bread? You can do it."* The words of the devil were all true. Jesus was certainly able and had the power to turn the rocks into bread, since He was the Son of God. Additionally, He was hungry after fasting for 40 days.

When Jesus, however, refused to succumb to this temptation the devil did not give up, but continued, *"Come with me."* In an instant both of them were standing on the top of a high mountain. Below them were spreading the nations, countries, and the richness of the whole world. *"They are mine"* said the devil, *"and I can give them to anyone I choose. I could give them to you Jesus, if you bow down and worship me here. Just fall on your*

knees...no one else has to know. We will keep it in secret...” Again, Jesus resisted the temptation for getting the easy power, glory, and riches.

Finally the devil led Him to the city of Jerusalem and stood Him on the highest point of the temple. *“Jesus, if you are the Son of God, if you really have divine power, then throw yourself down from here, for it is written that He will command his angels to guard you carefully. And when the people see you with a host of angels floating down into the temple court they will accept you as their Messiah.”* But Jesus refused this one, too.

In each case, Christ refused to be tempted. He did not accept to take shortcuts, the easy solutions and way out. However, God’s plan of salvation, let us not forget it, meant hardship, suffering, pain, and even death for Him, but finally it led to glory and victory. Satan did everything to sidetrack Him from His mission, because he knew what was at stake.

The “father of lies”, Satan, tempts us exactly in the same or similar ways as he did it with Jesus. He always offers us the easy options, the very attractive alternatives, the course that appears more logical, the path that seems to be the most natural thing to do, the direction that will satisfy our own cravings and impulses, but we fell deep inside that something is not right with all this.

Today I call you, my dear brother and sister, for self-examination. After listening to this sermon you might realized how weak you are when it comes to temptation. However, you can ask God to help you, forgive you, renew you, and give you a new beginning. Today you may rejoice that God is a God of revitalization, new life, He is the Lord and Father of new beginnings. Our comfort and strength in every temptation is that Christ has already triumphed over temptation on the cross. He has won the victory for you and me. Praise be to His name! Amen.

Yours in Christ,
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