

SERMON – PASTOR GREG

6/03/2022

1st Sunday in Lent. Luke 4: The temptation of Jesus.

What is your greatest temptation? What fall into temptation continues to haunt you? What are you being tempted with today? There are the obvious temptations like eating or drinking too much, anger, un-forgiveness, greed, jealousy and bitterness. Less obvious are the temptations to prove ourselves, to be liked by others, to be better than others or wanting to be noticed and affirmed. We all experience temptation and we all fall into temptation- from the very beginning.

In Genesis 3 we hear of the first great temptation- one which constantly threatens the Church: “*Did God really say?*” The serpent, the devil, the Satan putting doubt in the minds of Eve and Adam: DID GOD REALLY SAY?

Who is this Satan?

John 8:44: *He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies.*

Hebrews 2:14: *He holds the power of death.*

1 John 3:8: *He has been sinning from the beginning.*

1 John 5:19: *The whole world is under the evil one.*

Revelation 12:10: *The accuser of our brothers, who accuses them day and night.*

He was the one who sought to change God’s Plan of Salvation by causing Jesus to sin through falling into temptation.

“If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread... I will give you all their authority and glory, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours...If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written...”

But it was not only in the desert/the wilderness when Jesus was tempted. Again and again throughout his whole earthly ministry he was tempted to use to use his glory and his power to go the world’s way, the devil’s way and even the way of his own disciples and not his Father’s way. Remember when Peter said to Jesus: *Lord, this must not happen to you!* And the response of Jesus? “*Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God but of men.*”

The writer to the Hebrews also speaks of the temptations of Jesus: 4:12: *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way- just as we are- yet (he) was without sin.*

So how did Jesus overcome temptation? By knowing, speaking, believing the Word of God: *It is written: Man does not live on bread alone. (Deuteronomy 8:3: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD)*

It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only. (Deut 6:13)

It is said: Do not put the Lord your God to the test. (Deut 6:16).

So for us, our primary defence against falling into temptation is to likewise hear, read, know, pray, believe and follow the word of God.

Words like:

1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has seized you except what is common to all. God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. When you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

2 Cor 3:18: *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with every increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

But we will continue to fall into temptation- we will continue to sin. So what do we do? Psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, Alcoholics Anonymous and the like, all have their place. We need to understand why we do what we do and to put into place strategies and mentors and the like to help us.

But we also need to acknowledge our sins, to repent and to strive to overcome them: Philippians 2: *Therefore, my dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling (knowing) that it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

And another reminder. The Greek word for TEMPTATION is also the word for TESTING: PEIRADZO. The devil tempts us to lead us away from God. And God tests us to change us, to bring us closer to Him and to transform us to be more and more like His Son Jesus Christ.

God tested Abraham. God tested Job. God tested His people of old: Psalm 66:10: *For you O' God, tested us; you refined us like silver.*

And returning to Jesus- always back to Jesus- he himself was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. God the Father always has the first word and the last word.

Jesus has defeated Satan. He has conquered the power of death. He promises to be with you always- even as you fall into temptation. And he is always ready to drag you out of the miry pit, out of the threatening waves and out of the depths of despair by saying to you: I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. I HAVE LAID DOWN MY LIFE FOR YOU. I WILL RETURN TO TAKE YOU TO BE WITH ME FOR EVER. THIS IS MY BODY GIVEN FOR YOU. THIS IS MY BLOOD SHED FOR YOU FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS. GO IN PEACE. AMEN.