



"Managing Temptation"

First Sunday in Lent
8:30 and 10:45 a.m. Sunday, February 14, 2016
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Luke 4:1-13

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

I have a notebook computer, a tablet computer, a smart phone, an e-reader/Android tablet and another Android tablet that was more or less forced on me by my cell phone carrier, which I've used maybe three times. Those are the ones that work, and that I continue to use.

They have, or at least my smart phone has, replaced three, other handheld personal devices, both of which probably still work, but the batteries have died. I gave away the first of those handheld devices when I upgraded to the second one (which I did primarily because the second one came with a built in GPS map system). I've got a dead e-reader floating around the house, and another Android tablet I gave to my son to use at college. And none of that includes the ten inch e-reader that I left on a plane couple of years ago. That I never got back. So I *had* to replace it.

On my desk, in my office, I use that notebook computer and the tablet computer, and I have docking stations for each of them, along with a 25" monitor that is currently hooked up to the tablet, but I do switch it back and forth between the table and the notebook as I need to. I also have a set of speakers plugged into one of the docking stations.

I have a scanner on the shelf next to my desk, although that is not currently hooked up. I only have *one* of my approximately *four* external hard drives plugged in. I had a couple of them daisy chained together, but I need the little one at home to transfer some files, and just haven't gotten around to putting in back in the system (admittedly, all of those external hard drives are, at least, drives I have pulled from former computers so that first, I could donate the computer, and second, no one can grab my data off the hard drive, which they can't do if they don't have the hard drive).

At home, we recently upgraded to the top of the line router our provider carries, so we're now getting the fastest downloads that fiber optics can supply. I then got a range extender so we could get a good, strong signal all through the house - because you *have* to be able to watch Netflix in the bedroom. We've got four working televisions,

three set top boxes, two blu ray players, several sets of blue tooth speakers, noise canceling headphones, and ear buds.

Now, I like cars. I'm interested in most things automotive. My closets are filled with (probably too many) good clothes and nice shoes. I really enjoy science fiction, both to read and watch. The shelves behind my office desk are filled with books about the Bible, or history, or just Bibles (I have at least fifteen in my office, and I don't know how many at home). I enjoy a good pot of tea, or just about anything dealing with Walt Disney, both the man and the parks. But if, for some reason, you wanted to *tempt* me, get me to do something I might not normally be inclined to do, or simply to persuade me to do or say something in your own favor, computers and electronic related stuff would be your safest bet.

Actually, there are probably about three things you could tempt me with: computers; brownies; and Mountain Dew. Except the brownies are going to clog up my heart, and the Mountain Dew will pump up my blood pressure, so realistically, that pretty much just leaves the computers.

You see, that's the overriding factor in temptation: **It's personal**. I know I lost a whole bunch of you with my litany of devices by the time I got to "smart phone," and lost most of the rest of you when I started talking about "daisy chaining." But that's not important. What I'm attempting to get us all to realize here is, temptation is personal.

In our gospel reading, Jesus finds himself in a bit of a tricky situation; one which leads him open to being personally tempted. So here's the setup: In Luke 3, Jesus was baptized by his cousin John in the River Jordan. He comes up out of the water, is recognized by a disembodied voice:

"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22 NRSV)

Off he goes, out into the wilderness. He's out there for 40 days, and according to Luke *He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.*

So who should show up, but *diablous*, the devil, the "accuser," the "adversary," the "calumniator," (isn't that a great one? it means "one who makes malicious or knowingly false statements"). And *diablous* begins to offer that which is not his to offer, namely: food; the world, and; life.

Isn't it interesting how Jesus responds to each of these offers, each of these personal temptations? Every time the devil makes an offer, Jesus counters with . . . scripture.

One does not live by bread alone. (Deuteronomy 4:3)

Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him. (Deuteronomy 6:13)

So when the devil finally begins to smarten up, and quotes from the Psalms to Jesus,

He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:11-12)

Jesus responds with a third one from Deuteronomy:

Do not put the Lord your God to the test. (Deuteronomy 6:16)

Strike three, the devil's out.

Let's look at Jesus' responses. Sure, he quotes scripture. More importantly, in the first assault, Jesus responds with *nourishment* not from *bread* which is fleeting, but from the Word of God. Then, to the offer of world domination, Jesus responds by worshiping & serving only Lord God. Finally, instead of a scene stealing angelic rescue, Jesus says he'd rather have a right relationship with God. Notice anything consistent about those responses, anything that keeps being repeated? (Hint: that would be G-O-D)

Like I have said already, temptation is personal. Sin is individualized. What's going to trip **me** up, is not the same as what's going to trip **you** up (okay, yes, some of the big stuff is the same: the lure of wealth, power, comfort). But the actual, day to day things that will get in there and cause us to fail? Those are user specific.

If we want to be at our best to avoid such failure, we've got to be prepared more like Jesus. Like, know scripture, for one. Lutherans have become, unfortunately, rather Bible illiterate. So get to know your scripture better. Get a modern translation, something like the *New Living Translation*, or *The Message*. Then, and this I know is the hard part, **read it**. Daily. You don't have to sit down and plow through the entire thing. Try a chapter a day. It will take a while to get through the entire book, But, so? Contrary to the American psyche, the best learning does NOT happen all at once. It happens over time. So stuff can sink in, and be absorbed. A cool thing with most recent translations is that they've probably got some kind of a reading plan (or three), either in the front, or near the back. Use those. It makes reading - and understanding what you're reading - a lot easier.

Another thing you can do, then, is gather together for worship; regularly, and frequently. Worshiping only every Christmas and Easter is regular. I believe God wants us to more often than twice a year. And, yes, you can indeed worship God outside of a church setting, as many people over the years have said to me. To which my response has been, yes, you can; DO YOU? Yes, you can absolutely worship God by going for a hike in the woods, or drinking your coffee out on your deck watching the birds at the feeder. Just SITTING there, though, is *Not* worshiping. Worship is active; you've got to take part, be in conversation with God, or the person with whom you're hiking, and talk *with* God, talk *about* God.

And I like that last way that Jesus responds: *Do not put the Lord your God to the test*. Don't purposefully put yourself in to situations where you know you may well mess up. I

try to not go to Wegman's bakery aisle when I'm hungry, or into Best Buy when I depressed, because I know I'll make some poor decisions. Don't put yourself into situations that you *know* may well end poorly.

Did you happen to notice our Psalm this morning? Particularly, verse 15:

When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue them and honor them.

God promises to be with us. To be with us when all the good times are happening. But even more so, to be with us when all that stuff hits the fan. When we slip up and give in; when we fail in minor ways, or when we fall most spectacularly; God is with us.

That's how we manage temptation: *Knowing* that God is with us. Always.

Amen.

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