

Lead Us not Into Temptation

Luke 4:1-13 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

The Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted

Who here would like to follow Jesus for forty days wandering in the wilderness without food? That doesn't sound like much fun. I for one am very glad that it was Jesus whom the Spirit chose for this mission and not me. The worst I ever had to do was a day on a bus. Once I spent eleven hours on a bus in Nepal sitting next to raw meat. After that I had a bowl of ramen and hiked for four hours. That was pretty tough but it wasn't forty days in the wilderness. How glad I am that it was Jesus who went into the wilderness to fast for forty days in my place.

Jesus did not only fast in the wilderness but was also tempted for forty days by Satan. Again forty days of constant tempting is not something I would realish. Our text gives us three examples of that tempting by Satan but scripture makes it clear that these are only three examples that actually Satan was testing Jesus the whole time. Our confirmation kids are tested in the front of the congregation for 20 minutes and that is grueling. How long do you think you would make it if you were being tested constantly for forty days? Again, I am very glad that Jesus did this for me, so that I did not have to. The Spirit led Jesus to do this not me.

In the sixth petition of the Lord's prayer we pray "Lead me not into temptation."

We often pray this without thinking what exactly we are asking for. We are begging God that His Spirit would not choose us to be led in this way that Jesus was. It's like when you are in school and the teacher is looking to call on someone but you didn't do the homework, so you shrink back in your desk thinking, "not me, not me, not me." When we pray lead us not into temptation we are praying that the Father would not choose us to be the ones tested in the wilderness the way Jesus was. And we are rejoicing knowing that He hasn't chosen us but has chosen Jesus instead.

³ And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴ But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

Having fasted for forty days Jesus would of course have been very hungry and very tempted to do as Satan suggests here. This temptation reminds us of the Israelites who were hungry in the wilderness, but they gave into temptation and complained to God.

The forty days were not a coincidence. The Israelites were tested for forty years in the wilderness and failed that test. Jesus was thus tested in the wilderness for forty days to bring to succeed where the Israelites failed. Jesus stands here for the entire nation of Israel, one man in place of all.

In bible history with the fifth and sixth graders we have been talking about the Israelites in the wilderness and we learn the same thing about the Israelites every lesson. That they were "whiny little babies." When the Egyptian army was coming, they complained. When they had no food, they complained. When they had no water, they complained. When Moses was up on the mountain for forty days they made an idol. When they saw how strong the Canaanites were, they complained.

Of course, the one thing you notice about all of these complaints is that they are true, without water we would die. But they failed to trust God. Jesus resisted the temptation to turn rocks into bread because he knew that God would provide what he needed. Yes, he was hungry from forty days of fasting but He knew God would provide in His time.

The Israelites in the wilderness sound a lot like our lives. We complain about one thing and as soon as God provides that for us we forget about God's goodness and complain about something else.

These forty days of lent are a reminder that as Jesus endured the wilderness on their behalf to succeed where they failed, so He did for us as well.

We pray lead us not into temptation knowing that in the wilderness we would not do any better than the Israelites but so thankful that Jesus endured the temptation in our place.

⁵ Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." ⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, `You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Satan claims all earthly authority, does all this authority belong to Satan? The scriptures agree with Satan.

Jesus says in John 12:31 **"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."**

And also in 1 John 5:19 **"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."**

All earthly authority does belong to Satan, that is to say the authority of sword and force. Jesus's authority is the authority of God's word. When Jesus was preaching the people marveled because He preached with authority. He told Pilate his authority is not "of this world".

John 18:36 ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

That is to say if Jesus' authority was the authority of force He would use force to win. But His authority is the authority of His word. He rules in our hearts through His word not through force. Thus, even here with Satan He does not use force but only His word.

This is why we do not pray in the Lord's prayer, that God would destroy all those who oppose us or God. We do not pray that the Father would send His angels to slay all my enemies and all that would do me harm. That type of prayer appeals to our human nature. Let us get rid of all who might oppose us then we do not have to worry but that is not what we pray.

Rather we pray "Father lead me," that is to say, "Rule in my heart through Your word so that even when I am daily surrounded by those who mean me harm and would tempt me to sin I may remain in your love and can love my enemies even while they are tempting me to sin."

How often are we tempted to resort to force (political, physical or other) when people will not listen to us and when people oppose us. Jesus does not resort to force (with the exception of the cleansing of the temple which is something different) but rather His authority is in the word of God and in His sacraments. It is this authority which Jesus uses here to win against Satan's temptation.

"This, then, is "leading us not into temptation" when God gives us power and strength to resist, even though the tribulation is not removed or ended." - Martin Luther, Large Catechism

We pray that He would lead us through these temptations and what a wonderful thing it is that we pray this way. When we pray this way it means that we are able to love our enemies. Also since we are often the reason that others are tempted it means that God does not need to destroy us.

⁹ Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. ¹⁰ "For it is written: `He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' ¹¹ "and, `In *their* hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, `You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" ¹³ Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

When we pray "Lead me not into temptation," we are confessing that God is our teacher and our guide and we are the student. He does indeed test us, but we do not test him.

My understanding is that it is very dangerous to climb on a glacier because there can be hidden ravines that open up beneath your feet. If you are on such a glacier and you have a guide, how foolish would it be to leave the path your guide indicates. How dangerous to decide to test your guide by choosing your own path.

When we pray “lead us not into temptation” we are asking God to be our guide and we are promising that we will follow where He leads. We will not step off the cliff to see if our guide is strong enough to hold us and pull us back up again. Our guide is of course strong enough to hold us safe. We do not need to test him.

The Lord led me to preach His word in Nigeria. This was a very dangerous place to be. I went trusting God to take care of me. But when I knew that there were people waiting on the road to kidnap me I went on a different road. I did not stay on that road just to prove my faith.

With COVID these past couple years we trust God to take care of us but we do not go and rub our noses in the fluids of a sick person to test if God is going to take care of us.

God is our guide. We follow His path. He may lead us through temptation and danger but we do not test God by jumping off the temple.

In our Psalm of the day the Psalmist reminds us that God will protect us.

Psalm 91:3-4 ³ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler *And* from the perilous pestilence. ⁴ He shall cover you with His feathers, *And* under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth *shall be your shield and buckler.*

It is God’s truth which keeps us from the snares and poison of Satan. But there is one truth in particular that protects us. The truth that Jesus was led into the wilderness in our place. The truth that He died for us. This truth means that no matter what traps Satan lays we are forgiven through Jesus Christ who lived and died in our place.

What do we mean when we pray lead us not into temptation? We rejoice that He was led in our place. We ask for the faith to trust God to provide. We ask that He would give us strength even when the temptation is not removed. We trust Him to guide us. Above all we know that we are safe from temptations through His blood.

Amen