

**“Everybody Gets Tempted – Even Jesus”
(The Devil Is A Liar)**

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-6 & Matthew 4:1-11

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Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-6 ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” ... **3** ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Matthew 4:1-11 ⁴ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” ⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” ⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

“Grace to you and peace from Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen” You might wonder what a pastor emeritus does with his free time. I write limericks. “There was a Norwegian named Ole/ Who loved to eat guacamole/ He didn’t eat it on Mondays/ He only ate it on Sundays/ He wanted to be guaca-holy.” Aren’t you glad that I don’t waste my time?

Look at the people sitting around you. What is one thing that we all have in common? We all get tempted.

Our sermon for this Sunday in Lent is “Everybody Gets Tempted – Even Jesus”. (The Devil Is A Liar). A child might steal a cookie and be tempted to lie about it. A teenager might lie about not doing homework. “The dog ate it.” “I forgot it on the bus.” A young adult might be tempted to sleep around. “Everybody is doing it.” A lonely person might be tempted to take a second and third drink. “I am only hurting myself.”

A child telling little lies is not some awful sinner. But the more lies that we tell, the harder it becomes to tell the truth. Although many people might be doing a certain sin, they won't be there to help us when our bad choices catch up to us. If we think that we only hurt ourselves, we are forgetting the mother who loves us or the friend who no longer trusts us.

There are two reasons that we struggle with temptation. #1) James writes, “but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” (James 1:14 RSV) We get tempted because we have our own personal desires. We might hunger for success, popularity or love. Your desires might be different than mine, but if they aren't satisfied, we feel cheated and abused.

#2) We struggle with temptation because the devil is a liar. Many people don't believe in the devil. Jesus believed in him from personal experience. Just as every good thing comes from God, every lie, temptation and sin comes from Satan. The devil is a liar.

One of the oldest stories in history is “The Garden of Eden.” Eden was a place of beauty and peace. There was no sickness or death. God walked with Adam and Eve.

We read “... **the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”**

God gave Adam a warning. “**You can eat any fruit from any tree, except for one. Eat that fruit and you will die.**” That's pretty clear.

We read, “**Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”**

Here's how the devil begins his lies. He makes us doubt that God said a certain thing, “Did God really say?” It happens all the time today. “Did God really say that there are two genders?” Yes. he did. We read “**So**

God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female” (Genesis 1:27)

There are many religions. Did God really say that there is only one way for people to go to heaven? Yes, he did. **Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father (meaning heaven) except through me.” (John 14:6).** Either Jesus is a liar, a fool or he is the one way to God.

Then the devil changed God’s warning, **“You will not ... die,” the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** He made the fruit seem like a source of wisdom.

In the 1960’s people promoted LSD; a horrible drug, as a source of creativity and inner peace. The Beatles thought so. Many foolish people back then used it and fried their brains or became psychotic. The devil is a liar.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. These temptations helped Jesus to get his priorities straight. Would he love, trust and serve God the Father or not? We need to get our priorities straight too. Who will we love and serve?

Jesus went without food 40 days. He was hungry. The tempter said, **“If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”** **Temptation 1) What will you hunger for? The devil made him question if he was God’s Son. “If you are the Son of God... tell God to make these stones into bread.”** He made it seem as if bread could satisfy his hunger.

The devil is always making us doubt our faith. He tells us “You’re a mess. How could God love you?” We all have this emptiness that only Jesus can fill up. Maybe we try to satisfy that emptiness with friends, food or being busy.

Only a personal relationship with Jesus Christ can satisfy our desires. We meet Jesus in the Bible. Jesus fought that temptation by saying, **“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”**

Get a Bible and start reading Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Comedian Tim Allen shared recently that he just finished reading the Bible.

He said, “I didn’t skip a word.” It took him a year. It made him feel humble, excited and hungry to read it again. How about you?

“Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.” The temple was scary tall. **Temptation 2) The devil said,** ⁶ **“If you are the Son of God, “throw yourself down.”** For it is written: **“He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”**

The devil meant, **“Put God to a test. See if God won’t save you.”** People are always putting God to the test. They see the label that says, “Smoking leads to cancer.” So, they smoke anyway and think that God will protect them. But that label was God protecting us. How many loved ones have been lost to cancer?

People test God by not taking God seriously today. Years ago, I heard Paul McCartney state that he was saving God, church and faith for his old age. Instead, he tried everything the world had to offer. Paul was asked recently if he believed that Jesus was God’s Son. He said “No” even though he had sung in a church choir as a boy. Only Ringo has said recently that he has come back to his childhood faith. Praise God.

Jesus fought temptation by quoting the Bible, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” If you hear God’s voice today, follow him today.

Then the devil took (Jesus) to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. Have you ever been to a mountain top? You can see many miles of snow and magnificent peaks carved by the hand of God. From some mountains you can see many countries, the castles of kings, the riches of nations. If you’re like me, you don’t get too close to the edge, it’s easy to fall.

Temptation 3) The devil said, “All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me.” Simply said “If we worship the devil first and forget God, the devil will give us the riches of the world.” It’s often told in folklore how some musician, king or artist sold his soul to the devil to make his dreams come true. But in the end the person loses everything.

How many rich people take their lives? How many millionaires don’t have enough money to save their marriages or heal their children? In God’s

kingdom the rich person is the one who shares with others what God has given him. The happy person is the servant or volunteer. All the success and money can't buy us God's forgiveness.

That's why Jesus said to the devil, **"Away from me. ...Worship the Lord, your God, and serve him only."** Only the God who created the heavens and the earth is worthy of our praise.

Why does the story of Lent begin with the temptation of Jesus? **This story is important because it reveals Jesus' commitment to rescue us from sin, death and the power of the devil.**

He wasn't just tempted in the wilderness, but for three years. Each day he wondered if we were worth dying for. Every moment he struggled with his inconsiderate family, his faithless friends and the religious hypocrites. Even so, Jesus prayed from the heart, **"Not my will Lord, but yours be done."** He is our higher power.

This story puts our temptations into perspective. Everybody gets tempted – even Jesus. I don't have to beat myself up because I have given into temptation. You don't have to skip church. We all fall short of God's expectations. Tell God, "I might be a mess, but I am your mess." We are nothing more than sinners saved by God's grace.

James writes, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) We resist the devil when we recognize the devil's lies and make a healthy choice.

I remember coming home from work when our kids were still home. My son said something. I got angry. My daughter said something. I filled with rage. My other daughter did something. I saw red. Then I thought "They can't all be wrong. It must be me". I realized where my anger came from. I said "Devil, you almost got me. Jesus, I give you, my anger."

Martin Luther said "We can't help what birds fly overhead. But we don't have to let them build a nest in our hair." It's not a sin if our thoughts get ugly for a moment. It's only a sin when we hold onto those thoughts and play with them.

The story of Lent ends with Easter. Karen's mother Erma Turner died recently, age 98, a dear sweet woman. She led quite a life. Her dad died on

Christmas Day when we she was six. Her mother died when she was ten. Erma and her four siblings lived with a grandmother who died a year later. They stayed with an abusive aunt. They moved to an orphanage during the depression. She graduated from college, got married, and had five headstrong children. Her husband became an alcoholic. She had every reason to become cynical and give up.

Here's where Erma found her strength. Her mother said, "Erma, always go to church." Wherever Erma lived, she found a church, where she worshipped God and volunteered her time. She sat with her children in church. Even in her late 80's she never missed a Sunday or Bible study.

I asked Erma recently, "Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and that he died for your sins?" She answered "Yes". "Do you know that Jesus forgives you, and lives in your heart?" She said "Yes". I asked if she was afraid to die. She said clearly, "No. I have always had faith."

How do I know that Jesus is real? Erma found something that worked. I saw Jesus every day in Erma's smile, faith and kindness. Her funeral is April 11. I preach again. April 12. Thank you for your prayers. Amen.