

Matthew 13a
The Time of Trial
Sunday August 23rd, 2015

A story is told about a man who told his coworkers he wanted to lose weight. The problem was there was a donut shop on the way to work and donuts were his major temptation. He prayed, *“Lord keep me from temptation,”* and said *“Lord I won’t stop at that donut shop unless there’s a parking place right in front.”*

Well much to the surprise of his coworkers he wound up the very next day at work with a half eaten box of donuts. He coworkers were astounded and asked, “What gives”. The man replied, *“It was a sign from God to stop and get donuts. I had asked God to keep me from temptation and said I’d only stop if there was a parking place directly in front of the donut shop. And low and behold there was one.”*



At this point another coworker who was driving to work and had observed the stop said dryly, *“Yes, on your eighth time around the block.”*

So, does God entice us to sin? Do we have to pray, **“Lead us not into temptation”** to keep God from enticing us into sin, or is there more to this phrase in the Lord’s Prayer than meets the eye and ear?

Well like most words there is more than one meaning to the word “temptation” and meanings change through time.

“To the modern ears, the word *tempt* is always a bad word: it always means *to seek to seduce into evil*. But in the Bible the verb (*tempt*) *periazerein* is often better translated by the word *test* than by the word *tempt*. In its New Testament usage, to *tempt* people is not so much to seek to seduce them into sin as it is to test their strength and their loyalty (or faith) and thus their ability for service.” Barclay Matthew Vol. 2 page 258

This is why you will see various translations of our verse for today. Such as: **Lead us not into temptation**
And do not bring us to the time of trial.
Lead us not into hard testing
Keep us from temptation

In relation to the early church experience the time of trial or testing that they would have been thinking of would have been to deny their faith in Jesus under persecution.

In the time of the early Church it was a political/religious statement to say, **“Jesus is Lord”**. Because when a Christian said this they were also saying, “Caesar is not Lord.” To escape persecution and often times death, all a Christian had to do was offer a pinch of incense at the altar of the current Caesar, and they would be free. But to do this was to deny their faith in Jesus Christ. It was to deny and betray Jesus as Lord. So it was a test of faith.

Many would not let their witness for Jesus be diminished so they paid the price with their lives. The word **“martyr,”** its original meaning was **“witness”**. So many Christians died witnessing for their faith that the meaning of that word also changed.



Speaking of politics on Palm Sunday Jesus Christ was once again tempted to be the political ruler of the Jews and even the world, a proposition the devil had presented him with at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when He was tempted in the wilderness. Remember the Devil told Jesus if he bowed down and worshiped him he would give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. That test, that temptation came again to Jesus on Palm Sunday of Holy Week a week in which Jesus was sorely tested!!

It would have been so easy for Jesus on Palm Sunday to do that when he entered Jerusalem as a hero and prophet. Many were convinced that Jesus was the earthly Messiah who was sent to kick out the occupying Romans at the head of a vast army. He could have easily used this opportunity when 100s of thousands of Jews had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover. He could have seized power over the Jews and with the power of devil even taken over the Roman Empire and become the ruler of the known world.

Luke 4:14 says, **“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”** When the devil had finished tempting Jesus in the Desert and didn’t succeed in turning him from God; he returned again and again to tempt Jesus to turn aside from his identity as the One who was to defeat sin, death and the devil. As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the shouts and palm branches like a returning conquering King the temptation would have been there to avoid the cross, because Jesus knew the pain that was coming.

Jesus in his heart of hearts was praying the phrase we are looking at in His prayer, **“Do not bring me to the time of trial.”**

And God said, “No!”

Now Matt. 6:13, which reads, **“And do not bring us to the time of trial but save us from the evil one.”** has both a present as well as a future meaning. When I began this series on the Lord’s Prayer I said my intent was to show the incredible depth of this prayer that as we understand it more and pray it with deeper understanding our relationship with God will deepen.

The 6 phrases of this prayer are interconnected and explain each other. This particular phrase is similar to the second phrase in that it has both a present and future dimension to it. Remember the 2nd phrase says, **“Thy Kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?”** It speaks of us bringing the Kingdom of God here on earth to

the best of our ability, but it also speaks of the future when Jesus shall return and Kingdom of God in its fullness will be revealed.

In the present, “**And do not bring us to the time of trial, but save us from the evil one.**” is a prayer to be delivered from present hard testing and temptation and the evil effects of the devil. Its future aspect is that it is a prayer to be delivered from the chaos and pain of the time right before Christ returns. Some refer to this time as the Tribulation.

In terms of the interconnection of the prayer, when we try to bring the Kingdom of God to earth by doing God’s will it brings opposition and pain. It brings trial. As the Apostle Peter wrote, “**Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ,...**”

So to prayer to be instruments of God’s will here on earth is also to pray that we may do so in peace. It is to pray that there not be a time of extreme or hard testing; that we might advance the Kingdom in peace.

I wish that that were so, but when we oppose the forces of evil, as we promise to do in our baptismal and membership vows, we engender opposition from evil. We then can pray like Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane to avoid hard testing, but we also very much need to remember that God said, “NO” to Jesus.

When I started this series I said that the Lord’s Prayer was a framework or outline of how and what to pray for. Jesus demonstrates this in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. This was the opportune time when the devil struck his hardest.

Jesus’ prayer in Mark 14:36 is, “**Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.**”

Note the parts of the Lord's Prayer present here:

"Abba, Father,"

"everything is possible for you."

"take this cup from me."

"Yet not what I will but what you will."

"Our Father"

"Who art in heaven"

"Lead us not into hard testing."

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done"



And God said, "NO" to Jesus and took him through a time of horrible trial and testing. Jesus suffered; he was crucified, died and descended to the dead. And when you think about it, the joy of Palm Sunday was overshadowed by the joy of the day of resurrection. Jesus passed the test of faith and perseverance through the events of Holy Week and so he and we were granted eternal life. He is now complete and perfect lacking in nothing. Sin, death and the devil were defeated by Jesus' faithfulness in the time of trial. His example calls us to do the same.

James 1:2-4 gives us a promise to hold onto in the time of trial and testing because at times God says, "NO" to us when we pray, "Lead us not into hard testing."

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers (and sisters), whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature, complete and lacking in nothing."

The testing and trials have a purpose of perfecting us in the faith. I want to share a story with you of one of a friend of mine his journey of faith. He wanted a new job. He hated his old job and his boss was impossible if not cruel to him. So he prayed desperately for a new job. Jobs offers were made and rescinded when they learned of my friends

criminal record. It was a time of very hard trial. He almost descended into despair, but instead ascended in prayer.

He began to pray for his impossible boss and in the midst of that both he and his boss' attitudes improved. God worked in both of their lives and it became apparent to this man in search of a new job that God had a purpose in saying, "NO". He grew in his faith in God. He experienced the power of prayer, and on the other side of the trial God granted him a new job.

This is another example of how the parts of the Lord's Prayer are connected. Remember last weeks, **"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?"** At that time his enemy was his boss. As my friend prayed God worked a miracle in his heart. His boss did not exactly become his friend, but he no longer opposed him, belittled him; and when my friend left the boss gave him a good recommendation.

God is fulfilling promises when God says, "NO" to us in terms of trials. Here are promises from the Scriptures for time of trial.

Another is this, **"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."** 1 Cor. 10:13

And Jesus is with you when you go through these trials and temptations. Hebrews 2:18 says, **"Because Jesus himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."**

Jesus was in such anguish of soul that in the Garden it says of him, **"And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."**



Through that deep anguished prayer, Jesus came to a peace with his with the torturous trial he was facing, and left that time of prayer in confidence in the Lord's providing. God may have said, "No" to him avoiding the trial, but God said, "Yes" to his presence with him in and through that trial.

There is no greater truth, there is no greater reality than the promise that Jesus is with us in life, and in prayer, and in trial.

In fact I want to conclude this message by putting its thoughts to song. I ask you to join me singing #526, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. Let the truth of these words soak into your very bones and soul and hold on to these truths in the depths of your hardest trials.

1. What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Jesus bore all our sins and griefs on the cross so we don't have to. We need to bring our pain our grief to God in prayer.

2. Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Jesus took his trials, temptations and troubles to the Lord in Prayer, and God met his needs. God will meet your needs.

3. Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield thee;
thou wilt find a solace there.

At sometimes we are all weak, heavy laden and burdened with care.



And just like a loving Father God will take us in his arms and there we will find peace. Amen.