

TEMPTATION...! Be Prepared !
Gen. 2:15-17, 3:1-7 and Matthew 4:1-11

Temptation! I wonder how you would define temptation? Not giving us examples of what may tempt us... but explain what temptation is? Any ideas?

According to Wikipedia temptation is the inclination to sin; the coaxing or inducing a person into committing such an act, by manipulation or otherwise of curiosity, desire or fear of loss. That seems a pretty good definition.

We are thinking this morning about Temptation ! and our need to Be Prepared.

Temptation is a real issue for all of us. None of us are exempt from it!

It was very real for Adam and Eve, right back at the beginning of time

It was very real for Jesus - at the start of his ministry as we heard in our reading but also throughout his earthly life

And it is very real for each of us today. Jesus understood this and included in the prayer that he taught his disciples, and that we pray so regularly the words.... Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

Temptation is something that distracts or pulls us away from the path that God intends for us.

The devil, satan, the Serpent, the Tempter whatever we want to call him is **subtle** though!

He tries to tempt us in subtle ways, in ways that are attractive to us, and in ways that are personally applicable.

Look at what it says in the Genesis reading about the tree of good and evil

So when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**, and that it was a **delight to the eyes**, and that the tree was to be **desired to make one wise**...

It wasn't some mouldy old crab apple or some foul smelling Durian

No. The Serpent was tempting them with something that was good to eat - good for them physically.

He was tempting them with something that was a delight to their eyes - stimulated their other senses.

And something that lured them mentally - with the desire for wisdom.

The Tempter sows seeds of doubt... Did God really say 'do not eat from any tree...?'

IF you the Son of God....

He whispers distractions into our minds

He sets seeds of doubt

And although he may alter the specifics to individually suit each of us, touch our individual weak points, the underlying 'issues' are often the same

To do be independent (Do things our way) -therefore not remain obedient to God, trusting in God's ways and means

To win acceptance - playing into our all too frequent sense of low self worth

To gain wisdom or insight - wanting to be equal to God

To grow in power and social standing but by taking short cuts

Within all of us there are similar weak spots. How the tempter gets to them may be different for each of us.

But temptation rarely begins and ends with the actual deed of succumbing

Whether that be the eating of the apple, or the turning the stone to bread, or jumping off the great height.

Temptation begins much earlier on, often deep within us, in a weak spot in our armour.

And so to resist temptation we need to BE PREPARED

Jesus had spent 40 days and nights in the desert, alone with His Father, preparing His heart and mind and so was able to resist the very real temptations from the tempter.

What can we do to prepare ourselves, make ourselves stronger so that we can resist temptation

PRAYER - Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

But also prayer helps to **keep our focus on Christ**. A few weeks ago we were thinking about choice and what choices we make. Part of the reading from Deuteronomy then warned us about turning our heart away. That is so easy for us to do, especially when things are tough.

Think back to the story of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 16. God had promised them a family, descendants more numerous than the stars. Abram - a man of great faith. But times were tough. Time was ticking on and both were afraid that their body clocks were not going to allow this to happen. And so they turned their hearts away from God for a moment, took things into their own hands. Abrams slept with the maidservant of his wife and had a child that way.

In contrast we read of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.(Daniel 3) They had been asked to worship King Nebuchadnezzar and refused. They had kept their focus on God and said If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

They knew the temptation to save their lives by turning away from God and doing things their way. Who wouldn't? Turning aside from God and turning instead to King Nebuchadnezzar would mean they would live, they would not be put into the fiery furnace.

But they trusted their God and kept their eyes on Him

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this earth shall grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace

So to avoid temptation we need to BE prepared - through prayer and other spiritual disciplines that help us keep our eyes on Christ

We need to keep our spiritual and emotional buckets full...

And we may even need to prepare a response for those areas in our live where we know we are weak so that we are ready when temptation comes.. because it will.

Alcoholic prepares a response in advance of being offered a drink

When on a diet I knew that petrol stations were a temptation! Buy at pump

Temptation can be all around us

We were commissioned at our baptism to take the light of Christ into the world. At the end of each service we say 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ'

We each have a commission, a purpose for God and the tempter will try to stop us

He knows our weaknesses and what will be a temptation to each of us

So BE PREPARED

keep Christ as our focus, keep our buckets full and be prepared for those areas we know to be vulnerable

Then we stay on the path that God has for us, remain in His will and know the delight of resisting temptation.



You can't pour from an empty cup.... and neither can you resist temptation very easily when your emotional and spiritual cup is empty.