



11 PENTECOST
AUGUST 20/23/24, 2014

FIRST, MARSHALL
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Genesis 3:1-13; Luke 4:1-13; Luke 22:39-46
Trials and Temptations

Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Save us from the time of trial (Lead us not into temptation). And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Here's an interesting fact about our use of the Lord's Prayer in worship here at First Lutheran. We use three different versions of it! Please turn to the inside back cover of the hymnal – there you'll find the two most familiar versions printed. Together, let's read out loud the one on the top - the oldest... We say:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and
ever. Amen*

Now let's read the newer version below it:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and
forever. Amen*

Who knows the THIRD version of the Lord's Prayer that we use here in worship?

Whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper while **Rosie** is playing the organ – we **sing** the **Malotte** version of the Lord's Prayer. It's almost identical to the older version, with this difference. Instead of **saying**, *Forgive us our trespasses*, we **sing**: *forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*...

Though all three versions are very similar in their meanings, they differ when we touch on the **problem area** of our lives: we ask God to forgive either our **trespasses**, our **sins**, or our **debts**...AND we pray either **lead us not into temptation**...OR **save us from the time of trial**.

Trials and temptations – **which word do you think describes that difficult part of life the best?** *Trials or Temptations?* The problem with the word *temptation* is that it tends to make us focus on those little pesky problems in life, like:

- cheating** on a diet or homework assignment;
- fudging** on our taxes;
- telling a **lie** to make ourselves look better or keep us out of trouble;
- being **envious** of someone's wealth or house or job,
- or being **prideful** that *at least we're not as bad as that person.*

All of these problems are real tempters – but **none** of them touch the core of what's wrong with the **world**, what's wrong with our **souls**, what's wrong in our **relationship** with **God**. So when we fixate on these *little* problems of life, we tend to lose sight of the much **bigger** issues that haunt us. Do you know how Martin Luther referred to these little mis-deeds? He called them “puppy sins” – they're annoying, they're aggravating, they're silly and embarrassing – but they do not threaten our relationship with God.

Turn to p. 1164 in the back of the hymnal and let's read what the Catechism says about this phrase “save us from the time of trial” or “lead us not into temptation.” Let's read it out loud together. Here we go: *It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and win the victory.*

Did you catch that reference to the **unholy trinity**? The devil, the world, and our flesh, or our sinful nature – all three are constantly working against God through us. But ironically, neither God nor the devil are too interested in the little puppy sins we commit.

We see that in our second lesson for today. Just after he's baptized, Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness where *for forty days he is tempted by the devil*. You remember the three temptations:

- turn a **rock** into a **roll**...of **bread**,
- worship **Satan** and **win** the **world**, and
- force** God to **prove** his love by jumping off the pinnacle of the temple.

Jesus stands strong against all sins that assail us...yet, look again at the very last verse in that passage. V. 13 says, *When the devil had finished every test, he departed from (Jesus) until an opportune time*. So the devil wasn't done with the Lord – just biding his time.

Here's my question: when was that opportune time? When do you think that Jesus was at his weakest, his frailest, the time when he would be most susceptible to Satan's temptation?

I'm thinking it's the story in our Gospel lesson for today: Jesus praying the Garden of Gethsemane, just before he's arrested

-3 times the Lord warned his followers that he must suffer and die.

-And he called them to take up their cross and follow him.

-He has also cautioned them that those who love their life will lose it,

while those who lose their life, for the sake of the Gospel,

will find it. Jesus has been steadfast on this note – that his life would be a sacrifice, that one day **he would be killed**...

So here we stand at this critical crossroads in the Gospel story, and Jesus prays, *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me...* Talk about **temptation** AND a **time of trial**! Thanks be to God that this opportune time for the devil proved to be God's time of blessing for Jesus, enabling the Lord to end his prayer with those incredible words: *yet, not my will but yours be done...*

Trials and temptations – life is **full** of them. But the **biggest** temptation of **all** is to **not** trust that God is working in all things – especially in and through those trials that cause us great pain, and grief and loss. So with Jesus as our model, I'd like you to entertain the idea of changing the preposition in our petition. Where we usually pray, *Save us from the time of trial*, what would it be like if we were to pray, *Save us for the time of trial??*

You and I have been set free from any and every burden of sin – past, present and future – through Jesus' death on the cross. You and I are truly free to laugh in the face of the puppy sins we perpetrate – because we know that God is laughing at them too. You and I are free to live, love and serve God in whatever we do and wherever we are. And, you and I are desperately needed in this world that knows too much pain to **serve**, too much sorrow to **laugh**, too much despair even to **pray**...

In short, this world needs you and me – not *in here* where we're safe from many trials and temptations, but *out there*, living, loving and serving in a way that brings healing to those in pain, comfort to those who are crying, and hope to those who are helpless. Save us for the time of trial...

Isn't that what Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane? He **hopes** that his path of suffering might be changed...but at the end, he concludes with that amazing confession of trust: *nevertheless, O Lord, not what I want, but what you want; not my will, but thine be done...*

I'm really looking forward to this fall for many reasons – not the least of which is the fact that the Men's Bible Study group will be reading one of my favorite novels, John Irving's A Prayer for Owen Meany. I've never read a novel that has made me laugh, cry, and look deeper at my relationship with God, than this one.

On the opening page, the author has included three quotes. The **first** is from the Bible, the **second** is from Frederick Buechner, one of my favorite theologians. And the **third** quote is from a man named Leon Bloy. I know little about him but I'll never forget his sentence because it's so jarring: writes Bloy, *Any Christian who is not a hero...is a pig.*

I don't know what all he means by that quote, but I do know this: if you and I dare to call ourselves by the **name** of Christ, and call ourselves **followers** of Christ, then we should probably be willing to **live** our lives as **Christ** did – **sacrificially**, for the **sake** of **others**.

Owen Meany is the story of a boy who grows up to do just that. He was born with three distinct physical characteristics. He was very **small** in stature, so he was also very **light** in weight, and he had an **unforgettable voice**, so grating that it could not be ignored.

From the beginning, **Owen is convinced that God has made him this way for a reason.** As time goes on, the pieces of Owen's *life-puzzle* fall into place with all signs pointing to the fact that indeed, God does have a plan to use Owen to help some people.

In a journal entry before the big day, he writes, LAST NIGHT I HAD A DREAM. NOW I KNOW **FOUR** THINGS. I KNOW THAT MY **VOICE** DOESN'T CHANGE – BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY. I KNOW THAT I AM GOD'S INSTRUMENT. I NOW WHEN I'M GOING TO DIE – AND NOW A DREAM HAS SHOWN ME *HOW* I'M GOING TO DIE. I'M GOING TO BE A *HERO!* I TRUST THAT GOD WILL HELP ME, BECAUSE WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO LOOKS VERY HARD.

Maybe we Christians are called to pray this petition **both** ways: save us from the time of trial...AND...save us **FOR** the time of trial.

So thinking about Jesus as the role model for our lives, here are two questions I want you to ask yourself in the coming week:

Why has God made you the way you are – and how does God want you to serve the Gospel? May you be abundantly blessed by God's grace in your quest to answer those questions. Amen.