

Day 6 – Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

Preparing: *God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble. . .
He says: “Be still and know that I am God.”* - Psalm 46:1, 10a

Pausing: Enjoy a time of silent rest in God’s presence.

Reading: Mark 14:32-42

Reflecting: After provision and pardon, Jesus has us consider our need for protection. Importantly, Jesus was no stranger to that need in his own life. At both the beginning and the end of his earthly ministry he faced some significant tests. Both in the wilderness, where, after his baptism, he was led by the Spirit (cf. Ma. 4:1-11), and in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he led three of his followers after their celebration of the Passover meal, Jesus faced the temptation to spurn the will of the Father and do things his own way. In both spaces, as well as throughout his ministry, Jesus stood up to temptation and declared instead, “*Abba, Father . . . not what I will, but what you will*” (Mk. 14:36). As the divine Son of God, Jesus was also fully human and so we see him turning to a variety of spiritual practices so that he might be strengthened by his Father’s power and presence.

At its core, temptation is to fall away from a relationship with the loving God of the universe, walking away from his purposes and will by putting something seemingly more pleasing, but ultimately far less satisfying, in his place. Importantly, it is not God who tempts us, as James makes clear (1:13). Rather, we are tempted by the one the Bible calls the tempter, the evil one, or Satan. Jesus also refers to this personal power who opposes God as a thief who comes to “steal and kill and destroy” (Jn 10:10). He comes to steal peace, kill hope, and destroy lives, causing us to miss out on real love and on becoming the person God has made us to be. This thief prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pe. 5:8). Such is the evil we need to be delivered from.

Through it all, we need to remember that we have a powerful, temptation-fighting resource in Jesus. He understands our weaknesses, as he has faced them all and so knows what we need (Heb. 4:15-16). And, because Jesus was not delivered from evil, but went all the way to the cross, bearing the cup of God’s justice for us, we can be delivered too. A decisive victory over evil was secured in his crucifixion and proclaimed in his resurrection. Though the evil One still prowls around, his final demise is guaranteed.

A 16th c. hymn by Martin Luther, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, has in its third stanza this reality: “And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us...” In the midst of this, Jesus invites us to pray, like a cyclist riding close to and drafting off of a lead rider: “Lord, give me a safe ride today. Protect me from falling into potholes and crashing. Help me to trust your good and grace-filled lead as I follow you.”

