

**Sermon for the
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
The Lord's Prayer: The Sixth Petition**

Date: August 18, 2024
Location: Zion – Colby, WI

Old Testament: Genesis 39:1-20
Epistle Reading: Romans 6:1-11
Gospel Reading: John 8:1-18

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:9-13a
Sermon Title: The Lord's Prayer: The Sixth Petition

Introit: Psalm 28:1-2,7; Antiphon: Psalm 28:8-9

Hymns:

LSB 748 – I'm But a Stranger Here
LSB 766 – Our Father, Who From Heaven Above (v1,7,9)
LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own (v.1,2)
LSB 744 – Amazing Grace (v.1,4,5)

Distribution:

LSB 628 – Your Table I Approach
LSB 570 – Just As I Am

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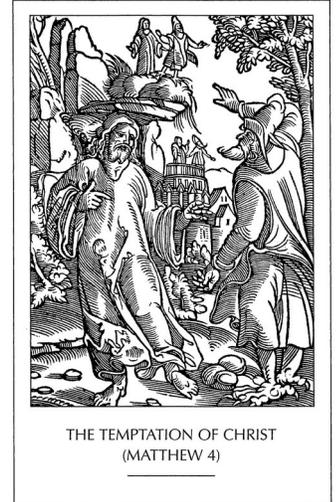
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Sermon by Phone: 715-316-4098



Text: Matthew 6:9-13a

Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **And lead us not into temptation,...**

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace to you and peace in Jesus' name. Amen.

Continuing our trek through the Lord's Prayer we are now on the sixth petition, or the sixth request. Jesus said:

Pray like this, Our Father in heaven...
lead us not into temptation.¹

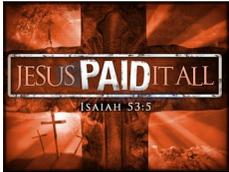


I want you to notice the close connection between the 6th Petition and the 5th Petition from last week. The 5th Petition deals with the forgiveness of sins and the 6th deals with temptation to sin. What struck me was the order. Wouldn't it make more sense for the petition about temptation to come first and then, if and when we sin we move to the petition on the forgiveness for our sin.



That however, is not the way Jesus gives it to us. He puts the Father's forgiveness first. Like we learned last week: God's forgiveness always comes first. Before we get to the topic of temptation and how weak we are to stand against it, and how often we fall into it, and how foolish and naïve we can be about just how dangerous sin really is,... Before we get to the topic of temptation we already know we are forgiven.

When you think about it, that really changes the way we treat the words, "lead us not into temptation." We're not asking God to keep us from falling into temptation, so He doesn't have to go to the trouble of forgiving us again and again. He has already paid the price up front, in advance and in full, before the debt comes. That tells us this petition, "lead us not into temptation," is the prayer of a grateful soul that wants to honor God by not falling to temptation again.



We could say, "Since God is so good to me, and forgives me all of my sins first, even with out my prayer, why should I be so concerned about the temptations that come my way? Why should I bother to pray, "lead me not into temptation"? Just relax about my sin. The more I sin the more of God's good grace I receive. Just be comfortable with my sin so God's forgiveness may increase, and His grace may abound?²

Why not? Because you know as well as I do that would be an abuse of God's grace. It would be an abuse of His love. It would be an abuse of Jesus' Body and Blood which we receive for the forgiveness of our sins. It would be an abuse of your Holy Baptism. Saint Paul actually answers this question specifically. He writes:

**If thinking something is the same as doing the sin,
why not do it hand have fun?!**

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

1 Matthew 6:13
2 Romans 6:1

We were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.³

A new kind of life. A life striving always to avoid what we know is inevitable. “Lead us not into temptation” is the prayer of a grateful soul who, in thanksgiving for the grace of God, is honored by our Lord’s suffering and death on the cross. Knowing it was for my sins that He was crucified, died and was buried. He shed His blood to wipe my slate clean. The only proper gratitude I can show is to resist and flee from every temptation, praying God would help me do so.

St. John tells us about the woman who was caught in adultery. The Bible records:



The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” This they said to test Him, that they might have some charge to bring against Him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask Him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once more He bent down and wrote on the ground.



But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him. Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”



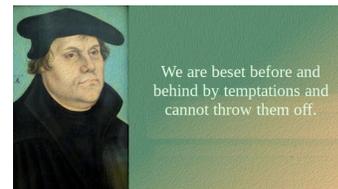
She said, “No one, Lord.”

And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”⁴

What did this woman do with what Jesus said to her? How did she live the rest of her life? The Bible doesn’t tell us so we can only guess. Maybe she went right back to her old ways. Hopefully she was so thankful for Jesus’ kindness she repented, turned from her sin and lived a new life. The new life Jesus had given her. That would be the appropriate response, the honorable response, the faithful response. Hopefully she prayed something like, “Our Father in heaven... lead us not into temptation.”



Temptation’s goal is to cause us to sin. It is sin that separates us from God. If you can avoid temptation you stand a good chance of not sinning. Right? If only it were that simple. In one of Martin Luther’s commentaries on this prayer he said:



3 Romans 6:1-4

4 John 8:3-11

We are beset before and behind by temptations and cannot throw them off.

Luther identifies the sources of temptation as, “the devil, the world and our own sinful nature.” That really does cut off every means of escape. You can’t escape the world, you can’t escape yourself, you can’t escape the devil. He’s coming for you and he will catch up with you.⁵

This means anything, absolutely anything, can become a temptation to sin. We tend to think temptation to sin is found only in the bad things, the evil things, the sinful things. If only it were that simple.



If something as innocent and pleasing to the eye as a piece of fruit can become the temptation to turn us away from God,⁶ then certainly anything else can. This is what makes our journey of faith through this life so dangerous. We may think we have charted out the safe path to follow, we may think ourselves experts in God’s Word and love, we may think we can identify the snares and traps set along the way to catch us. The truth is we cannot escape the temptations that surround us. In Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer⁷, He prays to the Father:

I do not ask You
to take them out of the world...⁸

Jesus does not say, “If you follow Me, if you are My disciple, then temptations to sin will not come.” In fact He promises, we will continue to be surrounded on every side by temptations, even as He claims us as His own. To His disciples He says:

Temptations to sin are sure to come⁹

because this world is fallen and corrupt, and so are we. Temptations to sin give birth to temptations to sin.

You don’t have to go looking for temptations, they will come looking for you, and they will find you. Luther liked to tell the story¹⁰ he picked up from his reading of the ancient Church fathers, this one comes from Saint Jerome.¹¹

Two hermits were working together and the younger one mentioned to the older one how he would like to be rid of all of his selfish and sinful thoughts and desires.

The older hermit replied to the younger saying, “My dear brother, you cannot prevent the birds flying over your head. But you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.”



5 1 Peter 5:8

6 Genesis 3:4

7 John 17

8 John 17:15

9 Luke 17:1

10 Luther’s Exposition on the Lord’s Prayer for Simple Laymen

11 342–420AD

If only it were that simple. It really does us no good to think, “If only I was a better Christian then I would be free of the temptations that harass me.” In fact, that idea can become a great temptation to sin. “If I *really* believed then I wouldn’t struggle so much with the temptations that surround me.” The risk there is: As sin continues to attack, as it always will, one might jump to the very wrong conclusion, “I must not really believe. Maybe I am not really a child of God and maybe God really doesn’t care about me.”



What about Peter who was tempted to deny knowing Jesus, while Jesus was on trial for Peter’s sins? What about David who was tempted when he saw Bathsheba bathing? What about Joseph who was tempted by Potiphar’s wife? What about Adam and Eve, the very perfect pinnacle of God’s creation. Even they were confronted with temptation to sin.



It is not those who have discovered the secret to escape all temptation to whom Jesus says, “...lead us not into temptation.” It is those who know the great danger in which they live, and who also know how weak and helpless we are to identify sin, let alone stand against it.



It is to those who are followers of Jesus Christ, the lambs of His flock, whom Jesus directs to pray that we would be led by the Father. “Lead us...” Let those two words sink in. Only believers, only followers, only the sheep of the Good Shepherd pray they would be led by God. To pray, “lead us...” is to confess we are blind. We cannot lead ourselves. We need to be taken by the hand. The Shepherd needs to go in front of us to “lead us not into temptation.” Isn’t that just what God the Father sent His Son into this world to do? Scripture records:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted.¹²



So much for the theory that faithful people aren’t confronted by temptation. God the Father sent God the Son into this world to be led by God the Holy Spirit into temptation which surrounds us all. With His divine sight Jesus sees every temptation to sin clearly. By His almighty power He falls to none of it. It is good, right and salutary that we should learn to pray this petition from the only One who has faced every temptation and withstood them all. Scripture teaches us:

We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.¹³

12 Matthew 4:1

13 Hebrew 4:15-16

To pray our Father would not lead us into temptation is not to pray for the power to find our course safely through the minefield that has been set before us. It is the prayer that Jesus, who has walked the minefield successfully, would lead us through it and we would follow Him.

It is true we are surrounded by temptations that come from the devil, the world and our own sinful self. There is no way we can escape any of that, but isn't this just the list of things Jesus has brought completely under His control through His death and resurrection? By His cross He has conquered the devil, overcame the world and gave us the Holy Spirit, who brings us to our Father as people who are grateful for His grace and desire to resist temptations to sin so we can glorify Him.

In other words Jesus has turned everything around so completely that now every temptation that once threatened to lead us into sin, and separate us from Him, has now become the very thing driving us to Him so we would cling to Him all the more.

The more we are tempted the more we flee to Jesus, and the more we pray, "Our Father, ... lead us not into temptation."

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



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