

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: The Lord's Prayer

Sermon: And Lead us Not . . . Trespass Against Us

Matthew 6:9-13

“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one.”

1 Peter 5:6-11

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon

Youth group - doing a road scavenger hunt by car. In my first few years of ministry back in the '90's. For some reason, I had a bag of marbles, not sure what to do with them, but then got an idea. Before youth group, I filled up my glove compartment with the marbles. It was tough to do. Later on, when the kids got in my car for the activity, we got going. I stopped at a convenient store to get a drink from the inside, and I left the kids in the car. But as I left the car, I told them - I'll be right back - but whatever you do, do not look in the glove compartment. Just, don't look. Be back in a minute. Sure enough, when I returned, there were four kids on the floor of the car trying to pick up hundreds of marbles rolling around everywhere. And they were mad at me! There's only marbles in there! We thought there was something good in there! And thus began our lesson on temptations.

We are all tempted by something. Or in my case, lots of things. Ever since God decided to put a forbidden apple in the middle of a garden, the human lot has faced a thirst for something we know is off-limits. We're tempted to cheat. We're tempted to lie. We're tempted to abuse our power. We're tempted to buy stuff we can't afford to impress people we don't even like. The person walking down the street could be a temptation for us. Here's a hint on that one - its on us, not on them. Confession is good for the soul. About 10 years ago, a woman caught me glancing at her rear end. It's true, it happened. But she was wearing yoga pants that had a big ol' plastered word across the backside. I wasn't looking at her rear, I was just reading. You see a word, you read it. Keep your eyes to yourself, but if you really don't want people to look at your rear, don't put words there. Especially if the word is Juicy.

Not sure how true this is, but it is a legend that's been around for centuries. If you go back 600 years, in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg Germany, lived a family with 18 children. Eighteen! In order merely to keep food on the table for this mob, the father and head of the household, a goldsmith by profession,

worked almost 18 hours a day at his trade and any other paying chore he could find in the neighborhood. Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of the children had impossible dreams. They both wanted to pursue their talent for art, but they knew full well that their father would never be financially able to send either of them to Nuremberg to study at the Academy. After many long discussions at night in their crowded bed, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would toss a coin. The loser would go down into the nearby mines and, with his earnings, support his brother while he attended the academy. Then, when that brother who won the toss completed his studies, in four years, he would support the other brother at the academy, either with sales of his artwork or, if necessary, also by laboring in the mines. They tossed a coin on a Sunday morning after church. Albrecht Durer won the toss and went off to Nuremberg. The brother, Albert went down into the dangerous mines and, for the next four years, financed his brother, whose work at the academy was almost an immediate sensation. Albrecht's etchings, his woodcuts, and his oils were far better than those of most of his professors, and by the time he graduated, he was beginning to earn considerable fees for his commissioned works. When the young artist returned to his village, the Durer family held a festive dinner on their lawn to celebrate Albrecht's triumphant homecoming. After a long and memorable meal, punctuated with music and laughter, Albrecht rose from his honored position at the head of the table to drink a toast to his beloved brother for the years of sacrifice that had enabled Albrecht to fulfill his ambition. His closing words were, "And now, Albert, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will take care of you." All heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated, over and over, "No...no...no...no."

Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at the faces he loved, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly, "No, brother. I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late for me. Look ... look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from arthritis so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast, much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a brush. No, brother... for me it is too late." Centuries have now passed. By now, Albrecht Durer's hundreds of masterful portraits, pen and silver-point sketches, watercolors, charcoals, woodcuts, and copper engravings hang in every great museum in the world, but the odds are great that you, like most people, are familiar with only one of Albrecht Durer's works. One day, to pay homage to Albert for all that he had sacrificed, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. (DON'T SHOW THE PIC UNTIL NOW). He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "The Praying Hands."

I'm fortunate that my job doesn't require too much work on my hands. Every now and then, but not like the old days. I remember working summer jobs with concrete and painting and assembly line and other work that just made for sore hands and sore back. God bless those who do work that takes a toll on the body. When my grandpa's stood next to each other, you could identify the farmer from the insurance agent just by their face and body posture. It takes a toll. One's not more noble or moral than the other, it just treats the body in different ways. I was talking to a lady the other day, looked like she had a hard kind of life. The difficult years zapped her youth. She then made a reference that made me wonder what year she was born, so I asked, when did you graduate. Two years after me. I would have pegged her a decade older than me, but life was not kind to her. She wore the years and scars and trouble on her face and body language. Or maybe I look older than I think.

Temptations, however, also take a toll on the body. Maybe not the physical body, although it can (depending on the temptation), but for sure on your spiritual state. Temptations are what lead us to sin. Temptations aren't sin, but they are the doorway to that prowling lion. It's interesting that the evil one doesn't cause us to sin, but certainly opens the doors for us to walk ourselves in. Lead me NOT into temptation, but deliver us from Evil. And the truth is this: When we sin, when we find ourselves living the life that God did not intend for us, we

emotionally wear the years and scars and trouble on our soul. We feel old. We feel spiritually dirty. We don't feel clean and minty fresh. Instead of wrinkled hands, we have wrinkled spirits. Instead of a sour face, we have a sour disposition.

So how are we tempted? You can be tempted to condemn yourself and "beat yourself up" by focusing on your past mistakes, sins, shortcomings, faults and failures.

You can be tempted to feel sorry for yourself and wallow in self-pity about life's disappointments or blame others for the situation you are currently in.

You can be tempted to get offended, hold grudges, and walk in unforgiveness because someone treated you badly. You can face the temptation to be bitter, resentful and vengeful; to be consumed with anger and a desire to get even no matter what.

You can be tempted to be spiritually lazy and lukewarm — daily Bible reading and prayer are neglected and you lose your hunger and passion for God. Living for God and serving Him is no longer a priority.

You can be tempted to "stretch the truth", to lie and be deceptive to gain advantage over people or to cover up your own hidden sin.

You can be tempted to compromise your integrity and Christian testimony by looking at things you shouldn't look at; going to places you shouldn't go to and associating with people (bad company) you shouldn't spend time with. God tells you to love everybody, yes, but don't equate evangelism with hanging out with folk who aren't good for your soul.

You can be tempted to worry, to get anxious and fearful about difficult circumstances and the pressures of life. You can get caught up and focused on the "cares of life" and the bigness of your problems instead of the greatness of your God!

Do I mess up? Yeah. Do I find myself facing temptation? Yeah, even Jesus did too. But you know what else? I'm also loved. So are you. Cast all of your anxiety on Him. If you find yourself in temptation, get out. Physically get out, mentally get out, spiritually get it out. Crazy little thought that creeps in the brain, kick it out. Call it for what it is - trouble. No good can come of this. Temptation is the doorway to sin. If you stick around temptation too long, you give that roaring lion a chance to find you. He can't find you if you get yourself out of the jungle.

And you know what? I'm tempted to keep on preaching, talk right thru lunch and keep speaking long into the afternoon. Better not yield to temptation - you'd think I lost my marbles. Church, stay clear of temptations - and keep praying for each other. No matter what your hands look like. And the family of God said, Amen!