

Sunday, October 5, 2014 – St. Mark's Church, Halifax  
– The Rev. John K. Morrell

The fifth in a series on the Lord's Prayer – *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

Different English translations of this passage from the Bible use the following words:

LEAD NOT / DON'T BRING/KEEP US/SAVE US - TEMPTATION/ BEING  
TEMPTED/HARD TESTING/TIME OF TRIAL

Temptation usually presents itself as something attractive and good. Children in school are tempted to share homework or to turn in something that they themselves have done. College students, especially in their first year and if they are living away from home for the first time, are tempted to experiment with alcohol, drugs and sexual partners. Adults may cheat on their taxes, or the self-employed take cash for payment to avoid collecting and paying sales taxes. We are tempted to lie, to steal a little (no one will be hurt), to deceive. The Temptation that Jesus is talking about is something quite different. It is the testing of our moral strength. To be tempted is to be enticed to do something contrary to God's will, or to deny or work against God's love.

This is what makes it a test. If temptations were ugly or hard, they would not tempt us. It would be easily enough to turn away and say, “No!” It is their attractiveness that makes them tempting.

When Jesus was beginning his ministry after his baptism by Cousin John, he went into the wilderness for a time of testing. The devil tried 3 times to convert Jesus to his side. Having succeeded in the forty days of testing, Jesus told his disciples that they would face real testing in the possible misuse of the power that God would give them.

Why does God allow us to be tempted? It is in our struggles of being tested that we not only gain strength, but can come into a more intimate relationship with God. If being a Christian was easy, we wouldn't have the opportunity to grow.

God has given us a free will to make choices. There are three stages in temptation:

1. The first is the suggestion.
2. The second is its appeal or attractiveness
3. The third is our decision to choose **for** or **against**.

We may not help being tempted, but through discipline and prayer (Paul calls it self-control) we can make the right choice. When we choose wrong, we are sinning.

The words testing or trials are again something else. Trials are ordeals that we undergo, whether they are the loss of a job, a child going wayward, or a diagnosis of cancer. Cancer patients get it right – it is a battle with a capital B. But for all their misery or heartaches, such events can actually strengthen our faith. Many survivors go on to share their experience with others as they have journeyed there before. The strength of family, friends and even strangers provide opportunities to decide what is really important in life, to learn patience and humility and to become closer to God and others. When temptation comes, you may find yourself being tested, do not resent it, or say, “This isn’t fair!” Say, rather, “Here it is! I am being tested. Help me, God, to resist and grow strong. *“Whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.” James 1:2*

DELIVER/RESCUE/PROTECT/KEEP SAFE from EVIL/EVIL ONE

If you were reading this portion of the Lord’s Prayer in Greek, the literal translation would be, “Deliver us from the Evil one.” There is so much evil on the world, we naturally think that some powerful being is in charge of it, like a general as the head of a wicked army. We do know that life is an endless battle. The time never really comes when we can put up our feet and say, “Now I can take it easy,” with the knowledge that all of our needs are being provided for.

We use the term devil, Satan, Beelzebub, the Evil one to represent all the forces that seek to defeat God's will. This picture is not murky or unclear; it is vivid and makes clear the differences between right and wrong.

Angels represent the agencies of God, frequently recorded in the Bible as beings with bodies like humans, who come to us to help us. On the other hand, the Bible also records that Satan was once one of God's angels, and withdrew from God and the heavenly hosts to set up a separate anti-kingdom to the Kingdom of God and heaven.

Satan's kingdom is one of entering into human hearts and minds to persuade us not to do good (that which agrees with the purpose of god) but to use our own free will to put ourselves, our needs, wants and desires above all others.

Jesus spoke about casting out devils, and he also described a person as being bound by Satan. The Bible also records demons that recognized Jesus as their enemy and he cast them out in the name of God. (Matthew 12:22-32, Mark 5:1-20).

Jesus death and resurrection proved a new victory over Satan and all his works. Our following Jesus can help us in our own personal victory over evil that we may think, want or do.

The basis for resisting temptation and keeping out of the claws of the Devil is prayer. To pray is to step into a spiritual world where good and evil are battling for supremacy. The battle is hard and real, and there is thousands of victims everyday throughout the world.

There will be times in our lives that we will face evil – by a direct confrontation in our physical world, or by confrontation in our spiritual life of prayer. The experience will frighten us, but when we pray "Deliver us (And by this I mean ME) from evil, we know that our call to God to save us will be heard.