

St. Andrew's Church - July 4, 2010

Sermon "Lord's Prayer Part 4" - The Rev. Doug Kendall

This is the written text I had for the sermon... the spoken version deviated more than a little. DK

Lord God,

May the words of my mouth,

and the thoughts and meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you,

our God and our Strength. AMEN.

Have you ever been to a dessert party?

I remember one time Pam and I had some friends over for a dessert party.

Each person or couple that came was to bring their favorite dessert to share,

And Pam and I would provide the coffee and tea and other drinks.

We also made one of our favorite desserts... chocolate mousse.

This mousse is made of whipping cream, semisweet chocolate, and vanilla.

Topped it off with a little more whipped cream,

some fresh raspberries from the garden, and shaved chocolate.

We had already put one leaf into our dining table to accommodate all the desserts,

but before too long as people arrived with their desserts,

we ran out of room on the table

and had to overflow the delicious desserts onto the counters.

I remember as I looked at all the desserts laid out on the table it struck me;

Pam and I had not arranged a dessert party, but a sermon illustration.

I looked at all those desserts, and thought "This is temptation!"

And I thought of the Lord's prayer.

"Lead us not into temptation.

So as you can imagine I began to think that it was my role as minister

not to lead all these nice guests into temptation, but deliver them from evil.

I began to calculate how much saran wrap I would need

to pack up all of this food and put it into my freezer...

to keep our guests from temptation, and deliver them from evil.

I would have to send them home without any dessert of course,

but wasn't it more important to keep them from temptation?

I was fairly certain that over the next few weeks I was spiritually strong enough

to consume the temptation without it consuming me,

and that was a risk I was willing to take...

But then I thought, perhaps this is not temptation.

Perhaps this is a little taste of what heaven will be like,

and who was I to deny our guests a little taste of heaven.
Then I thought... it takes a minister who needs a vacation
to theologically reflect
on a table full of cakes and cookies and whipped cream.
In the end we led our guests into the temptation of our kitchen,
and it did not seem at all as though anyone wanted to be delivered
from the evil of calories.

Temptation, sin, evil.

What is it all about?

How many real temptations do we face in a day?

How many other times of trial do we face,
that are pretty unimportant in our minds, but may be significant?

We live in a time of situation ethics,
when we try to justify our actions based on the situation we are in.

There is no definite right and wrong,
it seems as though everything is relative,
everything depends on the situation we are in.

This makes temptation all the more difficult to resist.

Sure, there is nothing wrong with gorging yourself on rich desserts... is there?

Sure, if a cashier gives you incorrect change,
there is nothing wrong with keeping it... is there?

After all it is not your mistake, it is theirs right?

If you see \$20.00 on the ground in front of the bank machine,
what are you supposed to do? You pick it up! everyone else would.

What about the even more serious temptations?

Are they just situations we find ourselves in, or is there something more to it?

The bible seems to give us mixed messages on this.

In the book of Job we see God and the tempter talking in heaven,
and God allowing the adversary, the tempter, Satan to tempt Job.

The adversary could do nothing without God's permission,
and the surprising thing is that God gave permission to the tempter!

So it seems from that as though God allows temptation to take place,
or even brings on the temptation.

Yet in the book of James we read,

"No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God";

***for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one.
But one is tempted by one's own desire,
being lured and enticed by it;
then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin,
and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.
Do not be deceived, my beloved.***

How do we deal with temptation, and where does it come from?

In the lord's prayer we pray to God that he will,

"Lead us not into temptation,"

or that he will "not lead us into the time of trial..."

In all of the commentaries I have read,

I was hoping to find some justification for changing the words

"Lead us not into temptation..."

because I do not like the idea of God leading anyone into temptation.

I much prefer the idea of us leading ourselves into temptation,

or finding ourselves in situations that we find tempting,

and then relying on God's wisdom to get us out of those situations.

Unfortunately all of the commentaries agreed that "Lead us not into temptation..."

is the closest to the original Greek we can get.

I did find one author though who appealed

to the Epistle of James as an authority,

and said we should just go ahead

and change the words of the Lord's prayer to,

"Grant me strength to resist temptation".

It is not possible to solve this problem of temptation nice and neatly for me,

or for any of us for that matter.

There is no simple answer to temptation.

The fact of the matter is the Lord's prayer says,

"Lead us not into temptation or into the time of trial",

temptation and the time of trial are the same word.

Part of begin human is experiencing temptation and dealing with it.

For some reason God chose to create us with free will,

and the ability and the need to choose between right and wrong.

While it seems odd to ask God to deliver us from temptation,

If you ask anyone who has successfully completed a 12 step program,

Like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous,

You will find that the common thread is relying on a higher power,
On some power outside of themselves
that helps them to overcome their temptation.

Perhaps we underestimate God's ability
to help us overcome the temptations of life?

I asked you all to do some homework two weeks ago, do you remember?

Now it is time for the quiz on that homework.

How many of you found in the bible,
in all your different translations,
the words "for thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory for ever, Amen?

Well if you did your homework you will have discovered that
in most translations in both the gospels of Luke and Matthew
those familiar words do not appear.

I did *my* homework.

I checked my other translations,
and those words are not in RSV, the Jerusalem Bible,
the new English bible, the Good News bible, the NIV
or any other translations I have... only in the King James. why is that?

Did any of you find it elsewhere? Do you know where they are from?

They came from 1 Chronicles 29:11, and also 2 Timothy 4:8.

They are what is called a doxology or an ascription of praise.

At times I end my sermons with similar words,
as a reminder to myself and the congregation,
that all of the glory is due to God, not to us.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Those words are not in the earliest manuscripts of the bible that we have though.

The first time they are found in print
is a late first century manual for the church called the Didache.

According to the Didache and other sources,
in the early church the whole congregation would not say all of the Lord's prayer,
they would come in and repeat only the memorized ascription of praise.

When the person leading the prayer had said,
"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,"
then the congregation would respond,
"...for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever AMEN."

By the time the King James translation was done in the 16th century,

that was so much a part of the Lord's prayer,
that it was assumed to have been in the original version,
and if it wasn't, then it should have been.

And so today when we say the Lord's prayer,
we are continuing an ancient tradition,
begun in the early church,
as we end our prayer ascribing to God all the honour and the Glory.

This brings us to the end of our series on the Lord's prayer
We began by emphasizing the fact that this is not an individual prayer,
but the prayer of the community...
it is not my prayer or your prayer,
it is our prayer, it is the church's prayer.

And now we have ended with our temptations.
Not just trivial temptations like having seconds of dessert,
But more serious temptations that can affect our very beings,
and at times it seems it takes something beyond ourselves
to resist those temptations.

Now as we come to the end,
It is interesting to think about the words we say so easily on Sunday morning.
It is important to think about the meaning of the words,
and what we are actually asking God for.

Ultimately what is not so important is which translation we use,
Or whether it is most accurate to the original Greek translation.
In the original context in our gospels Jesus was teaching the disciples
Words they could use to begin a conversation with God,
When they were not sure what to say.

That conversation has continued on for thousands of years,
And now we enter into the conversation in our own time.
An important thing to remember in any conversation,
Is that sometimes we also need to be quiet and listen.

In this prayer that we call the Lord's prayer
we have been reminded that God the Father or Aunt in heaven
is as close to us in Jesus as the first words on a baby's lips.
God is to be honoured and glorified in everything we say and do.
We pray that God's kingdom might come,
and that this earth might be transformed into a place

where God's will is taught and followed everywhere.

We ask for the simple things of life, like the very food on our table,

and are reminded that it is up to us

provide food for other people's tables around the world as well.

We pray for forgiveness,

and in return are told we also need to forgive others as well.

We pray that we might not be led into temptation,

but that when we are, we will be delivered from evil.

And finally when all is said and done,

with all humility we admit that everything in life and in death is in God's hands.

The kingdom, the power, and all the glory in the world are God's, now and forever.

And so, may all the glory and the power and the praise be to God who created us,

and to his Son Jesus Christ who gave us this prayer

and to the Holy Spirit through whom we are inspired

to bring this prayer to God. IN Jesus name, AMEN.