

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Luke 22:45-46; Mark 15:29-32

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

April 1, 2010 – Maundy Thursday



In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. On the night when our Savior was betrayed, He gave us His last will and testament as a pure gift – with a promise that this gift is for you – and that this gift is for the forgiveness of your sins. And then it was off to the Garden of Gethsemane – a place of temptation. Of course, you remember Eden, that other garden where Satan tempted our first parents, Adam and Eve. Now the Second and Last Adam, Jesus, also finds Himself in a garden. And He's also tempted. He's tempted not drink from the cup His Father has set before Him – the cup of Calvary's cross, bearing the sin of the world, and God's wrath against it – the cup of offering where He Himself is the Atoning Sacrifice to redeem all sinners. In this Garden, dear Christian, your salvation is at stake, and Satan knows it – but so does Jesus. The temptation to avoid Good Friday has to be immense, and you can hear it in Jesus' words: "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup."

If there had been no Good Friday, there would be no salvation – no forgiveness – for you or for anyone! So Satan worked overtime to knock Jesus off the road to Good Friday. And this he did to try and divert Him from going to the Cross – to stop God's kingdom from coming – to halt God's will from being done – and to stifle the hallowing of His name. Previously Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness following His Baptism with three enticements intended to divert Him away from His Good Friday journey. Satan failed that day, but went back to work at Caesarea Philippi. If you want to derail Jesus from doing Good Friday, then why not use an

Apostle? So Satan used Peter as his mouth-piece, who took Jesus aside and read Him the riot act: "All that suffering and dying talk is nonsense, Jesus! We won't be having any of that! No way will we allow You to be a dead Christ. Christs don't die! Dead Christs won't do us any good!" And then, Jesus rebuked Peter, saying to him: "Get behind Me Satan!"

Then came that moment at the Last Supper when Jesus' disciples were arguing among themselves at table who would be the greatest. After that, following Jesus' prayer in the Garden, Judas arrived with soldiers in tow to give His Lord a kiss of betrayal for some quick cash. And all the while Peter, James, and John couldn't stay awake to watch with Jesus in the Garden. The time had come. Tomorrow was Good Friday – that moment when Jesus would have to drink from the cup. And then, as He hung on the cross, Satan viciously attacked Him once again with a huge temptation – a delicious temptation offered through the two robbers and the chief priests. Through them Satan hides and yet speaks: "Come down," He says. "Come down off the cross and save yourself!" "If You are Christ, come down so that we may see and believe in You!"

What a brilliant temptation! After all, Jesus did come down from heaven so that sinners might believe in Him. All He had to do is give them a display of divine power by gloriously descending from the cross and miraculously saving Himself, and He had their promise that they would believe! But in that temptation, your salvation was at stake, and Jesus will not give in for that very reason. So He stays put and hangs fast until He dies – until your atonement has been secured. Final-

ly, Satan loses. His head is crushed. Death put death to death. Now there is no condemnation for you because Jesus has delivered you from all that by drinking the cup of the Father's wrath to its fullest. Jesus has proven that He is our Great High Priest – tempted in every way as we are – but without sin.

So, when you pray: “Lead us not into temptation,” pray believing that Jesus will be your Help in those moments when you are tempted. And believe me, you need His help. For Satan, his henchmen, the world, and your sinful nature, have turned their attention to you! They'd like nothing better than to deceive you into false belief and despair – especially after you've prayed: “forgive us our trespasses.” Satan's most dangerous attack sounds like this: “Jesus didn't die for you! Your sins are too big for Him! He really doesn't like you at all! He couldn't care less about you. You can't trust Him for anything, let alone some pie-in-the-sky myth called salvation.” And all this Satan does in the hope that you'll despair of Jesus and His Good Friday salvation – that you'll despise God's Word and turn to yourself or some other false god – so that you'll become arrogant and live your life with a sense of false security and have a hellacious end!

These enemies of yours would seduce you into hatred and envy – especially of those who are closest to you – to drunkenness,

greed, fraud, love of all things luxurious, a lust for affluence and the relentless ambition to keep it no matter what, honor, fame and power – to be on top and kick in the teeth of anyone who tries to displace you – a Tiger Woods, a Bernie Madoff, or a Nidal Hasan-like sin. That's the kind of sin that destroys lives – yours, others, and whoever else gets in your way – tempting you into all kinds of great shame and vice. So when you pray: “Lead us not into temptation,” realize that this is how faith talks – especially when temptations come pouring in. For these words are your ammunition – your missiles against Satan's assaults, the world's charms, and the seductions of your own flesh. These are the temptations that ought to drive you to Jesus – to the flesh and blood Jesus of Gethsemane and Golgotha – the very same Jesus who gives you His body and blood in the Sacrament this night as the promise of His victory over all your sin, the wicked powers of the world, and Satan. This Supper provides you with benefits for the long haul – for now and for eternity – for victory now and forever. For as Luther reminds us in the *Small Catechism*, where there is forgiveness of sins, *there* is life and salvation. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.