

Total Trust

Bible Reading:
Psalm 91: 9-16
Deuteronomy 26: 1-11
Luke 4: 1-13

PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA
ONTARIO, CANADA

Let us hear the Word of God:

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Some lessons in life we learn easily.

The most important ones, though, seem to be the hardest to learn.

Not in the sense that they may be complicated.

But for some maddening reason, it seems as if the really important lessons are the hardest ones to have stick -

- not just stick in our mind

- but really stick in our practice; translating, regularly, into our practice, our habits.

Ever noticed that?

And it seems as if God has to almost hit us over the head - hard - for these lessons to settle into our consciousness.

Like the one about whom we trust..... or don't.

We talked last week about control.

We talked about the blessing of being able to live with an open hand - living loosely with our lives and trusting that **God's** hand is wrapped firmly around them.

If God holds us

tightly, safely, firmly

then we don't have to hang on;

we don't need to grasp for control.

It's a matter of trust.

This week we see God delivering a knockout blow to one of the BIG areas in which human beings are very eager to keep control -

MONEY.

Understand right up front that money is just one thing; just one area of our lives where control is often an issue.

And yet - it happens to be a particularly sensitive one. I recall one woman saying, "*I'm not sure what I'm more sensitive about, my money or my weight.*"

Money, wealth is one of those zones of life that has a pretty direct route to our heart. It's a hot spot. A huge push-button area.

Check how you spend your money and you'll get a pretty quick picture of what matters to you.

In a wealthy society like ours here in Canada, wealth can - and I believe HAS - become a

spiritual stronghold; a place where evil worms its way in and exerts all manner of illegitimate and undue destructive influence.

So here are the Israelites.

You need to understand the context of Deuteronomy 26.

This whole book is presented as a sermon, Moses' farewell sermon to the people of Israel before they cross the Jordan River to take possession of Canaan.

They'd been traveling for 40 years in the desert, a nomad nation. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that nomad living is not a prosperous endeavor. It's been 40 years of hard times for these people. Now they were heading to new opportunities - opportunities for prosperity, even luxury. In this new land not only would their **needs** be met.

Now they could begin to stretch their imaginations beyond **need** to **want**.

And friends,

whenever a human being makes the shift from **need** to **want** they are moving into a very tender zone.

They begin, so to speak, to skate on morally thin ice.

It's very easy to break through and sink into the frigid waters of greed, of self-absorption, of selfish living. When a person is poor and can't see their own way clear, it is actually rather easy to reach out in desperation to the Lord.

But when a person begins to crawl out of the hard times somehow the urgency of reaching towards heaven, the inner desperation to be the caring grip of the Lord seems to diminish.

During wartime, for example, churches are full.
When peace returns, the pews begin to empty out.

As Israel skates towards that thin ice, the Lord in His infinite wisdom gives them a way of moral correction, a way to do a "reset" on their spiritual memory, to correct their devotional trajectory, to use this morning's language, back into orbit around the Holy One who is their Redeemer and Protector.

Imagine with me, if you would -

You and your parents have had a really tough time, for as long as you can remember. Now you'll be in a situation where,

finally!!

You'll have enough..... and then some.

What would jerk you to attention?

How about if someone came along and said, "*Don't dig your hands too deep into the harvest! Take the first crop, the best of that first crop, and bring it to church. Give it to God. Give it away. In the context of a worship service give it to God. Get on your knees and give it to God. Then get up, invite God's servants over, and let them as well as aliens who come into your country to eat it up. In that way, give it to God - your first crop, the best of that first crop.*"

It's called the *tithe*, and it's exactly what is prescribed here in Deuteronomy 26.

So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me. (v.10)

What God has given.....

Life is from God.
Our health is from God.
Our wealth is from God.
It is all in His control.
We receive from Him.
It is the gift of life.
Which we return back to Him.
Our existence revolves around Him.

That is the message of the tithe.

Keeping us in orbit around the Lord.

The One whom we celebrated with the opening words of this service, from Psalm 91 -

9 Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place,

10 no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

12 On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.....

14 Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name.

15 When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them.

It is a passage about protection, about our lives in the controlling care of a Heavenly One who is as a Father to us.

The Lord, our refuge.

The Most High, our dwelling place.

Doesn't that sound an awful lot like a life in orbit around God?

15 When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them.

That is God's great promise and gift to those whose life is in that kind of an orbit.

Understand that it is this orbit which Satan seeks to bring into decay. He wants it to deteriorate. He'd actually like us to spin off into some other sort of orbit, or fall down, crashing and burning - that'd be even better for him.

One of the primary weapons used by the Evil One in that mission of distraction, disruption and destruction is the weapon of temptation.

He **distracts** us with temptation.

He **disrupts** us with temptation.

He aims to **destroy** us with temptation.

Understand something, brothers and sisters.

The temptations themselves are not sin.

Temptations, as they appear in our lives, are not a reflection of our corruption and darkness. Having a temptation show up does not immediately mean that we have grieved the Holy Spirit.

It means that we have a weapon of spiritual warfare being utilized against us; utilized by the Evil One as he tries to appeal to our human nature and our inner desires and tendencies.

He tries to distract us away from a daily focus on the Lord.

He tries to disrupt our sense of closeness to Jesus.

He ultimately would like to destroy our faith in God.

Facing temptation was the very first thing on the agenda of Jesus after He began his public ministry. The gospel of Luke describes how Jesus was baptized, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him. That's Luke 3. His place within God's work of salvation history is described after that - the Ancestors of Jesus; his genealogy.

Things are now almost ready for Jesus to begin His public work.

But first the Holy Spirit sends Him into the desert for 40 days. 40 is the Biblical number of preparation. Moses was on Mt. Sinai, preparing to give the Law to God's people, for 40 days. Israel was prepared in the desert for entry into Canaan for 40 years. Jesus is prepared for the challenges of a three year public ministry with a 40 day retreat where the Holy Spirit was the key-note speaker.

At the end of that period, guess who shows up.

And can you imagine what he brings?

Read the account with me -

Luke 4: 1-13

Remember what I said -

Just because we have a temptation enter our life does **NOT** mean that we have done a spiritual "crash 'n burn.

Jesus faced temptation.

And what does Hebrews 4:15 tell us about Jesus?

That he was tested in every way just like us, sin excepted.

Jesus never sinned.

But He **did** face testing, tempting.

Satan tried to distract, disrupt and destroy him.
Praise God that he **never** succeeded!

Temptation is Satan's way to try and spin our lives out of their proper orbit around the Lord; away from trust in Him. And to do that -

He can make use of our natural bodily instincts and senses.

He can make use of outside influences.

He can make use of spiritual and mental inputs direct to our heart & head.

anything to make us trip and fall.

Temptation **doesn't** mean you are a spiritual failure.

In fact, it may well mean **exactly the opposite**.

Satan spends most of his evil time and energy on his worst enemies.

Like Jesus.

And faithful followers of Jesus.

Like you.

Why should he waste time and energy on those whose lives have already become distracted, disrupted or destroyed?

Why bother? They're his already!

Second - take temptation very seriously.

Following it has only one end - death in the hellish absence of God.

That was Satan's design on Jesus.

As it is for us.

Take temptation seriously, brothers and sisters.

It's there to destroy us.

Third, temptations come in different forms for different people.

For Jesus there were issues of his identity in the ministry what with it just beginning and all.

Hence the first temptation - **IF** you are the Son of God..... God may have been lying to you. You're nothing special, Jesus. Just a spiritually deluded human being. Test it out. Try and bake bread from stones.

Jesus' saving ministry was focused on bringing people back to God, getting them back into orbit around the Lord, surrendering everything to Him.

Hence the second temptation - overtly trying to pull Jesus out of orbit into worship of Satan and lured by power.

Finally, Jesus' temptation was going to be difficult. He would need the care and protection of the Lord to survive.

Hence the third temptation - *Jesus, you can't be sure about the promise of trust, you know. Better test it out. Better jump.*

These are three temptations tailored **exactly** to Jesus's situation.

That's how they come - tailor made to each of our situations.

God has designed each of our lives with a purpose in mind.

He equips us and guides us with that purpose in mind.

Temptations and spiritual challenges often come at **exactly** the point where that purpose starts to unfold and show itself in our life, or where it starts to make a positive difference for the Kingdom of God.

Your temptations will be different than those of the person next to you.

Because your God-given place and purpose in life is different.

Finally, even though there is temptation, and even though it is challenging, God can twist what Satan desires to be destructive, and turn it to our good.

That's the Bible's promise:

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. (Ro 8:28)

Jesus rises up from this time of testing and temptation, is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, returns to Galilee to teach – and his reputation spreads like wildfire.

The Holy Spirit will work in your life as you withstand temptation and use it to shape and deepen your spiritual strength and usefulness for the Lord.

So, stand - brothers and sisters.

Stand, as Jesus did, in the power of Scripture correctly handled.

Stand, as Jesus did, based on deep personal time with the Father in heaven.

Stand, as Jesus did, and call for the power of the Holy Spirit to replenish you and move you forward in the Master's service.

And when you fall,

go to Jesus.

Who understands your predicament fully - having been fully tempted himself.

Go to Jesus.

And find in Him **full** forgiveness.

*There is therefore now **NO** condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, says Romans 8:1.*

NO condemnation.

All removed.

Stain gone.

Guilt done.

Death Sentence abolished.

Access to the Holy Father fully restored.

Don't accept the line which Satan's little servants will most **certainly** feed you.

You have fallen.

You have failed.

God is frowning at you.

You are no good.

You are a nothing.

See, instead, the welcoming face of Jesus.

Hear his call - *Come to me, all you weary ones, and I will give you rest.*

And move forward in faith, in trust.

Live the life of the tithe.

Of trust.

Of surrender.

Of service.

Live in the confidence of these words from Romans 10:

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... The scripture says,

"No one

who believes in Him

will be put to shame."

Raise your empty, weak, tempted hearts in faith to Him who watches you with a loving, heavenly Father's heart.

And know that he will take you, and surround you, with His great, divine hands of protection;
strong hands;
safe hands.