Good Morning, Church! Buenos Dias!

*As much as I do not like to get up early in the morning, Sunday mornings I do say ***I Rejoice!***

*And, this morning, before we dive into the Word, I want to say ***Congratulations to ALL of you on Laity Sunday!*** The *United Methodist Church* has designated the third Sunday in October – that is every year – as *Laity Sunday,* a day to celebrate you, those of you who come every week to worship as one Body to celebrate Christ united, together, and in one accord. That means that we have agreed to celebrate Christ together.

But, it does not stay there. We, the clergy and the Church as a whole, celebrate you because it is you who hold the Church together; it is You who share Christ with the world; it is You who create bridges to connect with the world to share Christ and bring hope.

We, the clergy, alone cannot do it because you are the ones with a vision and with a strategy to, again, connect. SO, congratulations and thank you for a kingdom work well done. Let's go ahead and continue to be creative; continue to grow; and continue to learn.

*This year's annual conference call to action was: ***Love Boldly; Serve joyfully; Lead Courageously.*** You can do it! Again, thank you for your service! Thank you for your fidelity! Thank you for your support and desire to grow and learn!

Now, how about we pray and get into the word for today?

Holy Spirit, thou art welcomed into this place.

Open our eyes to see. Open our ears to hear,

Our minds to understand,

And warm our hearts to believe.

Now, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts

be pleasing in your sight,

Oh Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. **AMEN**.

Have you ever been tempted? Have you enjoyed it?

I am not going to ask what type of temptation you have experienced because – like me – I me sure you have experienced all sorts of temptations. Besides, if your spouse is sitting next to *you, I don't want you to get in trouble *(wink)*

As we continue to explore *The Lord's Prayer,* today we find ourselves with a prayer, I believe, *all of us have said at least once, ***Leas us NOT into temptation.***

Which temptation?

Some people are more prone or sensitive to certain type of temptations: ***lies, sexual, financial or related to money like fraud or stealing, stealing, hatred, etc.***

The Bible groups temptations in three categories: *Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes and the Pride of Life.* **1 John 2:16** reads this way,

> ***for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh,***
> ***the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—***
> ***comes not from the Father but from the world.***

After his baptism, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and was affirmed by his heavenly father, we are told in the gospel according to Matthew – that Jesus was tempted by the devil at the end of his 40-day fasting. See? The devil waited until Jesus was tired (well, exhausted) and hungry. Other versions say that Jesus was *starving, about to pass out.*

Matthew 4:1-11 tells us how is that Jesus was tempted in each of these three areas:

- Lust of the Flesh: verse 3-4, ***IF you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread, but Jesus answered: It Is Written, One does NOT live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.***
- Lust of the Eyes: verses 8-10. ***The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to him, All these I will give you IF you worship me. BUT Jesus replied, Away, Satan, for It Is Written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.***
- *The Pride of Life:* verses 5-7, ***IF you are the Son of God, throw yourself down for it is written He will command his angels . . . and Jesus replied, Again, it is written, Do NOT put the Lord your God to the test.***

*Since the Garden of Eden, temptation has never changed.

Temptation continues to appeal through our eyes to our ego, to our needs, to our pride, to our knowledge.

CONFESSION TIME: Some time ago I decided to take my diet regimen a little more serious. I had gainEED a considerable amount of weight and was beginning to feel uncomfortable with my body . . . still feeling uncomfortable with my weight gain. Anyway!
Through that process I gave my husband permission to help me with sticking to my diet. Not that I listen to him that much, but I tried and did asked him to help.

On one occasion, we decided to go out and enjoy the outdoors.
Towards the end of the day, I decided I wanted ice cream from Jessop's in Old New Castle***.*** And, guess what? He said, ***NO. you are on a sugar-free diet.*** My reaction? Do you think I listened to him? NOPE.
He "tried." He did. BUT the "red apple was TOO red and I was just too focused on it and the only thing I could see was the temptation. YUP. I did yield to it.

BUT, I wish all temptations are as innocent as that one.

EVERY day EVERY human being over the face of the earth is being tempted to do something wrong, improper, not wise, horrific, harmful, evil, dumb, or stupid . . . Who agrees with me? Sadly, there its ALWAYS a price to pay for each of our decisions.
The problem is that we then try to pin it on God, ***why didn't you take it away from me? You know I am too weak for that.***

In the Garden of Eden, Adam had been given instructions about what to do and what NOT to do. I'd like to think he shared that information with Eve. But NOOOO. She knew better.
Then God comes, ***Adam . . .*** His reaction? ***The woman YOU gave me.*** It turns now that it was God's fault. ***You gave ME this woman.*** And, the woman? ***The devil made me do it.*** And, interestingly, we know it doesn't work, but we continue to use that excuse, ***The devil made me do it.*** And the snake? ***Well, that is me.*** (wink)

Tradition has told us to stand in front of the temptation, rebuke it and resist it. BUT, the example that Jesus gave us was, ***It is written.***

It is important that we KNOW the scriptures, that we learn the scriptures so that they are readily available to us in the time of need.

Some years back I read a short account about the subterranean Christian church in China. One of the home churches shared about how they have to be careful at not keeping Bibles so when the police comes they cannot find evidence.
BUT, instead what they did was that whenever a copy of the Bible fell in their hands, they would tear it apart so that each person could have a couple of pages.
They would learn, memorize the page or pages they received and then share with the siblings in Christ whenever they came together, ***It is written.***

Luke 6:44-46 teaches us a powerful lesson, ***each tree is known by its own fruit . . . it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.***

It is important that we guard the deposit of our minds and hearts, because it is that deposit what is going to rule how we life, how we obey, and how we follow God.

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When the people of Israel left Egypt and before took over the promised land, God gave instructions about what to do with everything they have learned.
From Joshua 1:7-8 we learn these instructions,

7 be careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

The words are: ***be careful, meditate day and night***

From Jeremiah 29 we have learned that God told his people, ***Yeah, I know, you are captives. Stop whining and obey.*** (*my paraphrasis*)

There are two UGLY realities we should NEVER forget about temptations:

1st – **No One** is exempt. But we all need to follow directions.

2nd - ***There is ALWAYS a price tag whenever we yield to TEMPTATION.***
God will give us grace, but we need to deal with the consequences of disobedience.

*I learned something very powerful from who was my pastor in Chicago many years back:

The Blessing of Obedience is greater
than the Blessing of grace/mercy.

WHY? because when we messed up, there is a harm that has been made. Then we have to go through a time of reasoning, recovery, learning, adjusting . . . and then . . . A Blessing comes. When we obey from the beginning, that time of . . . call it what you want to call it, does not exist. ***For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.*** Obedience is the highway for the full blessing.

When Lot was told to leave Sodom before the destruction, the angels of God gave them ***one (1) instruction, ONE, "Do not look back"*** But his wife had to. She wanted one last view.

The prophet Ezekiel (chapt. 3) received instructions from God.

3 And he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel." 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

4 He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the people of Israel and speak my words to them.

Jesus taught us in the ***Lord's Prayer*** how to involve God in our lives, even for the basic things, spiritually & earthly: to live healthy, wise, and responsible relationships with God and with our neighbor.

The Lord's Prayer follows the rule of the Great Commandment, *Thou SHALL love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.*

James 1:17 teaches that ***ALL GOOD THINGS COME FROM GOD ABOVE.*** So, NOPE. Goes does not tempt. God Blesses.

God does not make business or dealings with the evil one.

But, God made an amazing provision for us . . .

From **Hebrews 4:15** we learn*: **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.*

A few verses here:

- Matthew 26:41 says, stay ***AWAKE and PRAY*** that you may NOT fall into temptation . . . .

- James 1:12 says, Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. He/she will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

NOW, GOOD NEWS,

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, No testing/temptation has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will NOT let you be tested beyond your strength, BUT with the testing God will provide the way out so that may be able to endure it.

Surrender, Trust & Obey.