

DENAIR FRIENDS CHURCH

Devotions with Matt

April 22, 2020

NOT FALLING PREY

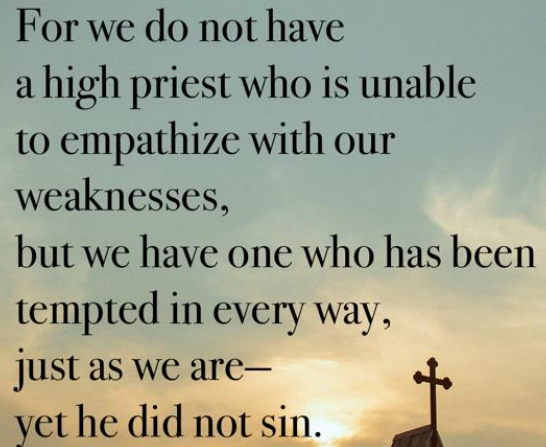
I remember a long road trip my family took when I was a kid. There were 5 of us in a cramped car making our way across about 10 states and 4000 miles roundtrip. We were shoulder to shoulder in the back seat. It was mid-summer and the air conditioner didn't seem to be powerful enough to cool down the car or our rising frustrations with each other. Trying to gain a little more room, one of us would lean a little more on the person next to us to push them away. A little elbow would shoot back to keep us in our place. Soon, there would be words passed and then a full blown pushing fight. My mom would pull the car over and, with a look, tell us to knock it off. The excuse came next: "She started it".

We as Christians sometimes have the same attitude. We just seem to be minding our own business, everything seems to be going fine and then something happens. Someone cuts us off in traffic and we get angry. Someone says something that we feel is a slight and we respond in kind. Someone seems to be taking more than their share of toilet paper or hand sanitizer at the store and we judge them. If we could analyze our response in the moment we would probably say, "That person started it." But if we really wanted to get theological about our sinful response to things around us we might say, "The Devil made me do it."

In Matthew chapter 4 Jesus was fasting for 40 days and 40 nights and was led out into the desert to be tempted by Satan. Three times Satan tried to get Jesus to go against His Father's will and against the mission He was sent to accomplish. Three times Satan tried to get Jesus to sin. Three times he longed for Jesus to give in to his temptations. Three times Satan longed for Jesus to say, "The Devil made me do it." This would have thwarted God's mission to seek and save the lost. Jesus' holy blood would then have become tainted with sin and would not have been sufficient to cleanse us of ours. Satan longed for Jesus to give into his temptations, but it never came. Three times Jesus used the Word of God to overcome Satan's schemes. And because Jesus overcame Satan and his temptations, so can we.

That is part of the New Life that Jesus' death and Resurrection offers us. Christianity is not just about morality for morality's sake. It is about a relationship with our Risen Savior. It is about eternal life with Him. It is about our Creator restoring our lives to the way they were created to be. Sin takes us away from that life. It is harmful to us and harmful to those around us. It is harmful to our communities, our nations and our world. Sin takes our focus off of God and puts it on us, our wants and our desires. This is why Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. This is why Satan tempted Jesus. This is why he tempts us today. He would love nothing more than to get our eyes and minds off of Jesus and onto sin. He would like nothing more than for us to say with dejected hearts, "The Devil made me do it".

One day Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and with him sin and death. But right now he roams the earth seeking to devour God's most precious creation- you and me. And how he devours us is to have us fall prey to his temptation and sink into sin. His desire is to take our focus off of God and the life He offers us.



For we do not have
a high priest who is unable
to empathize with our
weaknesses,
but we have one who has been
tempted in every way,
just as we are—
yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 4:15

The night before Jesus was arrested and subsequently crucified, He went to the Mount of Olives to pray. The sins of the world were going to be placed upon Him and it was a burden He thought He might not be able to bear. That night He looked to His Father for strength and it was given to Him. That night He gave His disciples, and us, a way out of falling into temptation. He told them to pray. In other words, when temptation comes, and it will, to look away from it and look to God. When temptation comes we are to go to Him for our strength and ever-present help.

Whatever temptation is coming your way right now, remember we have a Savior who overcame it with the Word of God and prayer. Remember we have a God who is bigger than Satan. Let's turn our focus off of the temptations and back onto our Lord where it belongs. Let's spend time in His Word and in prayer. Let's focus on Jesus who overcame Satan and sin so we can do likewise. Because of Jesus we no longer have to say, "The Devil made me do it."

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are...yet he did not sin." Hebrews 4:15

In Christ,

Matt