

The Lord's Prayer: "Lead Us Not Into Temptation" and Doxological Ending

Introductory Comments

1. Temptation has many layers of meaning. It is the ice cream in the freezer or the bottle in the cabinet? The cake on the counter or the tendency to lash out when frustration sets in? Is it a specific word, applying to one particular type or degree of temptation or simply a generic term for any and all of them? Like the word "love," the word "temptation" conjures up so many meanings that it is nearly meaningless. It all depends on the context of use.
2. In considering the wider context of Jesus' day, he lived in a lull between two violent rebellions against imperial oppression in his Jewish homeland. The first one was under Augustus in 4 BCE. The second was under Nero in 66 CE. But in a narrower context, Jesus lived in the midst of a series of non-violent reactions to Roman control. These involved the census for taxation in 6 CE, the provocative actions of Pilate in 26 CE, and the attempt by Caligula to have his divine statue erected in Jerusalem's Temple in 40 CE.
3. As previously noted, the concluding doxology (most commonly added to the recitation by Protestants) is widely considered not to be original to the text. It was first translated in a codex from the late-4th Century, and also in the Didache (a 2nd Century church teaching text). It was designed to provide completion to the prayer and was often said by lectors/cantors. It also serves to end the prayer the way it begins, with a vision of God in heaven.

Questions, then review today's lines from Lord's Prayer

Questions for Discussion

1. **The primary correlate to the idea of "temptation" and "deliverance from the evil one" in the gospels is Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Read Matthew 4:1-11. What are the temptations that Jesus faced and what do the interactions between him and the devil tell us?** *The first temptation begins with the tempter's challenge: "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." In this opening temptation no biblical citation is given by the tempter, but Jesus refuses it by quoting Deut 8:3: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (4:4). Miraculous power cannot be used for personal use – even for that seemingly appropriate task of creating some bread after a 40 day fast.*

The second temptation follows from the first, with the devil now picking up on the idea of every word that comes from God's mouth: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (4:5-7). Here the tempter cites Psalm 91:11-12, and Jesus rebuts once again with a citation from Deut – this time 6:16. Notice also that, although the first temptation was utterly

private, concerning food for Jesus all alone in the desert, this one involves a public display of miraculous power. It tempts God to protect Jesus while Jesus “proves” his divine identity.

The third temptation is climactic. This time the tempter doesn’t begin with “If you are the Son of God,” but just proceeds as if that’s true. Nor does he quote any biblical citation. Instead, he goes straight to the temptation, taking Jesus to a high mountain and showing him all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory. “All of these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me” (Mt 4:8-9). In saying this, the tempter is not referring to “creation” or “the world” or “the earth,” but of “all the kingdoms of the world” along with their “glory” and “power.” That is the violent world of civilization – as demonstrated, for example, by the 20th Century – rather than the nonviolent world of creation – as demonstrated, for example, by Genesis 1. The tempter does not own and cannot offer the “world that God so loved” (John 3:16), but only the world that we are told not to love – the world of fleshly desires, and pride in riches.

- 2. Based on the temptation story, what is the precise difference between worshipping God and worshipping Satan?** *To obtain and possess the kingdoms of the world, with their power and glory, by violent injustice is to worship Satan. To obtain and possess the kingdom, the power, and the glory by nonviolent justice is to worship God. They are, in other words, two ways of establishing our world and controlling our earth.*
- 3. Most people think of temptation as an immoral inclination to do an evil act. But in the context of Jesus’ day (in light of Rome’s violence and the uprisings against Rome) temptation may have a more precise meaning – the temptation to use violence to achieve an end (even if it is a good and moral end). If that is so, how does this portion of the prayer change its meaning for you? What does it mean for you to ask to be “rescued from the evil one?” What does a commitment to nonviolence mean to you?**
- 4. How does Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11) inform our understanding of the doxology, “for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever”?** *It’s a line that throws our allegiances into crisis – to which kingdom will we grant power and glory? God’s or this world’s? Who ultimately reigns – God or Caesar? Kingdom, power, and glory are risky, dangerous words. The world loves these words. Kings build their kingdoms and defend them with murderous intensity. Politics is the exercise of power. And glory is what emanates from those who have power.*
- 5. How has your view of the Lord’s Prayer changed in light of this class? How has what you believe you are praying for changed when you recite the ancient words of the Lord’s Prayer?**
- 6. How is the Lord’s Prayer like a “revolutionary manifesto”? Do you agree that it is? What does that phrase mean to you?**

****Thank you for participating in this study. Stay tuned for new offerings!*