

Victory of the Lamb – March 17, 2019 – Let's Be Real

1 Corinthians 10:13 "What Has Your Heart?"

Have you ever seen a mirage? Like when you are driving down the highway in the middle of the summer and it looks like there is water on the highway up ahead. Or like in the movie and real life, when someone is parched in the desert and they look up and they see this mirage of water glimmering in the distance. A mirage is an optical illusion caused by atmospheric conditions caused by the refraction of light from the sky by heated air. Another definition is something that appears real or possible but is not in fact so. This morning we are continuing our series – Let's Be Real – and we are going to consider the mirage of temptation.

We all have, are, and will face temptations. What temptations have appeared before you this week? In one of our cabinets at home I have a couple of temptations: one is named Oreo and another one named chip. They don't bother me too much . . . until after supper and then . . . well on Wednesday I needed to send a text message to my sister because she called just as I stuffed my mouth full of broken pieces of temptation chips from the bottom of the bag and I couldn't talk. Food is good, but too much or too little not so good. Have you ever gone to target. You are just going to pick up a one or two things. But as you pass the red carts you decide to take one anyway, it will just make things easier. And as you go up and down the rows things just start jumping off the shelves and into your cart. You get to the clerk caused you are not going to check and bag all these items and she asks: Did you find everything ok? And you're looking at your full cart and thinking yeah, I actually I have lot more than I came in for. Materialism just quietly sneaks up on us up down the rows of the store and ends up hopping into our cart. Stuff is ok, but not too much. Then there is Drew said: While my wife and I were shopping at a mall kiosk, a shapely young woman in a short, form fitting dress strolled by. My eyes followed her. Without looking up from the item she was examining my wife asked, "Was it worth the trouble you are now in?" This last week I heard the stat that 1 in 2 men, and 1 in 5 women are entangled with pornography, and some don't even know it yet. Sex is great . . . inside of marriage not outside of marriage. Temptation is a mirage offering a lot more than it can actually provide.

At the center of all temptation is the mirage of the hope for happiness. The reason temptations are hard to resist is because hope is hard to resist. Temptations threaten us with missing out on happiness or less misery. Temptation offers a shimmering oasis of promised joy or relief from despair appears where God said it wouldn't be. The mirage's appearance taps into our real desire with a yearning of hope that maybe *this time*, even if we've been disappointed many times before, there will be hope but it is – false hope. In the name of happiness people have ruined relationships including fracturing families, fallen into addiction, quite often found everything but happiness and some have even ended their lives.

Satan tempted Jesus in the same way. When tempting Jesus to turn a stone into bread, Satan was offering Jesus the illusion that bread would fill his life but had he done so Jesus life would have truly been empty and so would yours and mine. Satan tempted Jesus to listen to him and not to God and if he had God would not listen to Jesus our mediator or listen to us in our prayers. Satan tempted Jesus to go down mirage path of a cross-less crown which actually would have made victory impossible. Satan was trying to corrupt Jesus's holy, God-given desires, with a short cut to happiness – which by the way Satan doesn't have to give in the first place.

Satan gets our heart beating faster with temptation. Just once. It won't hurt. Nobody will know. You are only human. God wants you to be happy. Satan tailors these temptations to you and me individually. That is one of the reasons why sometimes we look at what other people do and go, "Well that was stupid." The other reason is we look at people and think what they are doing is ridiculous is because pride goes before the fall and we are about to make our own misstep, if not the exact same one we are condemning. Satan will most likely not ever tell you or me to grab up a gun and go shoot someone with it, but he will entice us to assassinate someone's character and name through words.

Being tempted isn't a sin. In fact fighting off temptation is a very courageous and good battle. As you know from like experience you will continually have to fight off temptation. I'm tired of the fight. I hate the struggle. Satan says, I know so just do it and then you don't have to do it again. And if you have fallen for that, like I have, you know it is easy to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all the ones that follow after sin. The problem is when we get intrigued with the temptation because this is what happens next: James 1:14,15 **each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.** In other words when we sin, no matter what it feels like at the time we have found not happiness but death to our soul. Temptations offers false hope while God provides real hope.

Let's be real – we have all slipped on temptation and fallen into sin. Let's be real – we have all toyed with temptation in our mind and it so captivated us that we turned our back on God's love and jumped for the joy earthly gratification. Let's be real – we have all run with temptation right into the perils of hopelessness and sin. Romans 7 And after we have sinned Satan with great passion and fright tells us, "you have gone too far. You are sin is too big. This mess can never be fixed. You turned your back on God and now he is going to turn his back on you."

There is hope for true and lasting happiness even after we have fallen for hopeless schemes and sin and tried and best failed. Into the fight of temptation and sin comes the sinless Jesus. He was tempted in every way yet was without sin. This isn't supposed to make us feel like losers, this is supposed to lead us to rejoice in our redeemer. Hebrews 4: **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.** ¹⁶ **Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.** In the Old Testament the high priest represented the people and made sacrifices for their sin. As a high priest Jesus represented the people and sacrificed himself to pay for all our sins. When Satan tempts you to despair, rebuke him with the reminder that he lost. He is a spent force. He is not the king of hell; he in fact will be its most notorious prisoner. Forever. Jesus' victory is your victory. It is now locked in the past, and for all his tricks Satan cannot undo it.

Last week on FB I saw this video of a giant python wrapped around a medium sized dog. The owner and friends of the dog come out and start beating on the snake with sticks. At first the dog's tail is wagging. He likes the touch. He thinks this is a game. The dog is having a great time. But the pressure of the squeeze becomes too much and the dog's tail stops wagging. He now knows he is caught. He becomes stiff as a board. And within seconds goes limp. The owner and friends of dog kept beating on the snake. And the snake let go. Just as the dog owners beat the snake with the stick to have that snake let their dog go, even more so God in Jesus has crushed Satan through the wooden cross and empty tomb so that you can real and eternal happiness. Remember after the snake abused our first parents, God's promise:

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

So as victorious children of God when you are tempted and when it is so difficult to stay the course here are some things for you to do. 1 identify Satan's false promise of hope. 2. Look to God for hope. God is the one who has true hope and happiness to give.. **Psalm 42:11 Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.** 3) Remember God's promise to you. When you are struggling and it is really, really hard remember God's promise to you: 1 Corinthians 10:13 **No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.** Jesus told his disciples to: 4) Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray. 5) Call on God's word: Declare, like Jesus, (Matthew 4) "It is written" and take your stand on a promise God has made to make you happy. Don't fight hope merely with defense to on the offense. Fight false hope with true hope.

But you know what, let's be real. You and I aren't going to be perfect with that. And that kinda stinks. Everyday all of us face temptation, that pull to do something that God says isn't right. And we fall, and we give up hope. We pray and pray and still often fall. But God has something that is more powerful than all our prayers and our will power, Titus 2:12, 13 **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ** It teaches us to say "no." Do you know what the "it" is? It is found in the verse before. Titus 2:11 **For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.** "It" is grace. The writer doesn't talk to us about the consequences of sin or the threats of God's judgment. He says the grace of God has appeared. It is God's grace that inspires us to say no to sin. Grace changes the human heart so that we say no to sin. If you are struggling with sin, praying is important, being in God's Word is important not because of any do's or don'ts but because there we see not a mirage but God and his grace for you in Jesus. And that is what brings us happiness now and for all eternity.