**Trials and Temptations –**

**A reflection in prose**

**September 4, 2016**

**Narrative Lectionary – Pentecost 16**

Luke 11: 1-4 Russell Mitchell-Walker

Temptation. We all know what it is.

Being drawn to do that which we know we shouldn’t

Or which isn’t as good for us

Or which would get us into trouble

Or which could even hurt or kill us, or others.

It can be hard to resist temptation.

Some of the things we are tempted by are enjoyable

Chocolate or sweets,

Staying out with friends later than one should,

Eating too much of a good meal,

And many more.

Some things we are tempted by are not necessarily bad

But may have been defined as such by society, by religion.

So something that one person thinks is a temptation

May not be to someone else.

Some temptations are related to our personal boundaries, needs or preferences

Others are related to rules or laws.

We say in the Lord’s prayer, Lead us not into temptation,

But how or why does or would God lead us into temptation?

That is the question to explore.

Would God lead us to temptation?

According to James the answer is no.

James writes: “*Let no one say when they are tempted,*

*“I am being tempted by God,”*

*for God cannot be tempted with evil,*

*and God himself tempts no one*” (James 1:23)

So why would Jesus say this?

If we look at the translation

The word used here, actually is closer to trial,

And some translations say, lead us not into the time of trial.

This was written in the time

When Christians were persecuted, jailed and punished and

even killed

For practicing their faith.

It is a prayer that they not be faced with the choice between

being tortured or killed

Or denying their faith.

So it makes sense for the community to pray to God,

That they would not have to go through such trials.

Life is full of trials and challenges.

Struggles with work and family;

Living with disease or experiencing death;

Experiencing abuse or discrimination;

Struggling with mental illness or loneliness;

Whatever trials we face,

We know, or should know

That God does not cause them.

We also know that God is with us

in the trials and tribulations of life.

So praying that we not be led to times of trial

Also is praying that we be guided through the times of trial.

Leading us not into temptation,

May also be a prayer to help us resist the temptations

That will get us into trouble

Or cause us problems

Or damage our life

Or hurt our relationships

Or…

The list could go on

But turning to prayer,

To the strength and love and wisdom of the Divine

Is an important Source to draw on

To help us resist

And to seek support in the challenges of life.

Sometimes we have strong feelings

That tempt us to respond in ways that may not be best

Anger is one of those.

How often have you gotten angry

and then said or done something you later regretted?

There is nothing wrong with anger

It can be how we deal with it that can be the problem.

There is a lot of energy in anger

So next time you feel angry,

Resist the temptation to react

And work toward responding.

Breathe and focus that energy to a more positive outcome

To work to address the issue that made you angry,

To have a constructive conversation with the person who said or did something that made you angry.

We can be tempted also to stuff it or ignore it

And that can be very harmful.

Talk about it with others,

And come up with a strategy to address the problem or issues.

Resisting temptation does not have to be done alone.

God is with us in those around us too,

Who support us in times of trial.

Prayer and temptation go hand in hand.

When Jesus was tempted –

In the desert to take the path of power and control

and just before his crucifixion, when he was tempted to

not go through with it all,

and asked that this cup be taken away;

Prayer was an integral part of both.

Jesus was praying and fasting in the desert,

To discern God’s way for his ministry.

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane

As his heart was heavy with the thought of being crucified.

Both times, he gained wisdom from prayer,

God’s wisdom,

He gained strength from prayer,

In order to do the right thing.

Prayer and temptation go hand in hand.

Which is why ‘lead us not into temptation’ or ‘to the time of trial’

Is in the Lord’s prayer,

To remind us the importance of praying

to pray that we not face them

and, when tempted

When faced with trials,

To remember to turn to prayer,

And God

And those around us, the God in others

To help resist temptation

And draw on support through times of trials.

May we know that God is with us when tempted

And facing trials.

May we turn to God and prayer when we face

Trials and temptations

Knowing God is with us

We are not alone

Thanks be to God.

Amen