

Call to Worship

Please rise in body or spirit, and join in the
Call to Worship printed on the back of your bulletin.

Leader: Gracious and holy God, when our trust is
anchored in you,

All: your steadfast love surrounds us.

Leader: When the life and teachings of Jesus guide our
path,

All: your steadfast love frees and unites us.

Leader: When we say yes to the stirrings of the Spirit
within,

All: your steadfast love invigorates us.

Leader: When your Presence reaches the depth of our
being,

All: your steadfast love leads us on.

by Howard Royer
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Opening Prayer

Gracious God, great is your faithfulness. Even
though there are times we turn away, your love still
remains. Fill our hearts with that love and faithfulness.
Help us to love you like you love us. Continue to show us
your goodness as we worship and sing praises to you this
next hour. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

(written by Meghan Knight, worship leader)

Our hymn of praise is
“Great is thy faithfulness,” #327

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Narrator: Meghan, from lectern

God: Pete from pulpit,

Serpent: Mike, from the back of the sanctuary

Woman: Grace Miller, stand in center on the floor

Man (a non-reading part): Gary, next to Grace

Narrator: The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man,

God: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Narrator: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman,

Serpent: “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

Narrator: The woman said to the serpent,

Woman: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’”

Narrator: But the serpent said to the woman,

Serpent: “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Narrator: So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

adapted by Meghan Knight
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Pondering Temptations

The serpent convinced the woman to take a bite of the fruit of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. It was “*a delight to the eyes*,” after all, and wisdom is much to be desired, is it not? The man did not require much convincing to follow suit, and so – according to the ancient book – sin slithered into the world. It always seems to be that one thing you just can’t have that you want more than anything, isn’t it?

Temptation - the strong urge or desire to have or do something that we really shouldn’t, something that is bad for us, or wrong, or unwise. The urge itself is not what gets us into trouble. Standing at the counter of Dunkin’ Donuts, looking over their selection isn’t what makes us gain weight. We can look to our heart’s content. It’s the giving into the urge and saying, “I want one of those, two of those, three of those, four of...” well, you know. Often, it’s a matter of not putting ourselves in harm’s way. Temptation slithers up on us when we do so.

I invite you just now to ponder your temptations, and I’m not so much thinking of donuts, as I am of the things that tend to really pull us away from the persons we truly are, and from the God who really is. Now, it could well be that your sweet tooth is the temptation with which you struggle more than anything else. In medieval times, they called this “Gluttony” though, as one of the *seven deadly sins*, this covered more than food. **Gluttony** is the urge to overindulge in anything, filling us with what eventually kills us. Our God becomes our belly.

Perhaps this list of seven deadly sins might be helpful for us in pondering our temptations. The basic premise of the sin of **Pride** is: “I can go it on my own, under my own power and authority. I don’t need God or others. I am self-made.” Some of us really struggle with this temptation. And then there is **Envy**, desiring what others have or who they are, often accompanied by a hatred of them because of this, which may be misplaced hatred of ourselves, for not having what they have or being like them. It may spill over into hatred toward our loved ones or toward God for not providing.

Anger becomes deadly when we hold onto to it, allowing it to be like a yo-yo pulling us back to some past hurt, disabling our ability to move beyond it. Anger can tear us apart on the inside, sometimes looking like depression on the outside. Sound familiar?... The sin of **Sloth** is not so much laziness, as it is a lack of joy in what we do, that it really doesn’t matter. It is also called *Acedia*, which means “not caring.” As we run the rat race, we really don’t care about what we do, or really enjoy it, instead hoping without much hope that someday we will. Is this you?

Lust is the desire to have everything go our way, on our terms, all the time. It’s ultimately about control. Sexual attraction, for instance, is not the problem. God created us with it. However, when desire turns into conquest, or domination; when we see someone else as an object to possess or control to meet our needs, then we stop loving them as we should love our self – the second commandment according to Jesus...

Which brings us to **Greed**, which flows from an inner feeling that we never have enough. Focusing on what we lack turns our attention away from what we have. We feel like we're always just scraping by. Now, some of us are truly scraping by, but have you ever noticed that often the people who have the least are the most generous? Greed is deadly because we never are satisfied. Is that something with which you struggle?

This list of seven deadly sins may be helpful for you this morning as you ponder the temptations with which you are battling. Perhaps one of the following: gluttony, pride, envy, anger, sloth, lust, or greed describe your current struggle. Could be your biggest temptation right now is best worded in a different way. What threatens to pull you away from being who you truly are – the person God created you to be? What is pulling you away from the Lord at present? Can you put it into words?

During the Offertory, I invite you to try writing it down. In your bulletin is a small piece of paper especially for this purpose. If yours fell out, or if you don't have a pen or pencil, raise your hand and someone will bring you one. No one but you will look at this. Still, don't put your name on it. We'll use these later in the service. What is the temptation you struggle with the most currently? Write it down.

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

The opposite, as well as the cure, for gluttony, pride, envy, anger, sloth, lust, or greed is temperance, humility, gratitude, faith, hope, love, and generosity.

In his second letter to the church in Corinth (9:7), the apostle Paul wrote, "*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*" Now is the time to return our offerings. As you do so, pay attention to what pulls you away from being what Paul described. Write it down.

Ushers?

A Psalm of Confession & Forgiveness

(Reader 1 speaks from the lectern. 2 & 3 stand – first getting a microphone – on either side of the congregation, halfway back the aisle)

1 - Psalm 32, A Psalm of Confession & Forgiveness, as rendered by the Contemporary English Version. Listen.

(pause)

1 - *Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away. You bless them by saying, “You told me your sins, without trying to hide them, and now I forgive you.”*

2 - *Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long. Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat.*

3 - *So I confessed my sins and told them all to you. I said, “I’ll tell the LORD each one of my sins.”*

1 - *Then you forgave me and took away my guilt.*

2 - *We worship you, Lord,*

3 - *We worship you, Lord,*

1 - *and we should always pray*

2 - *always*

3 - *always pray*

1 - *whenever we find out that we have sinned.*

2 - *Then we won’t be swept away by a raging flood.*

3 - *You are my hiding place!*

2 - *You protect me from trouble,*

3 - *and you put songs in my heart*

2 - *because you have saved me.*

3 - *You said to me,*

1 - *“I will point out the road that you should follow. I will be your teacher and watch over you. Don’t be stupid like horses and mules that must be led with ropes to make them obey.”*

2 - *All kinds of troubles will strike the wicked,*

3 - *but your kindness shields those who trust you, LORD.*

2 - *And so your good people*

3 - *should celebrate and shout.*

1 - And all God’s people **shouted**:

C - **AMEN!** (repeat previous line if congregation doesn’t shout)

Psalm 32 from the *Contemporary English Version*®
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