

*Edmund and the Wardrobe.* The second in a series of sermons preached on the theme Advent in Narnia on December 3, 2017 at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Texts: GENESIS 3:1-3

JAMES 1:12-16

To recap – we last saw Lucy standing at the lamppost in this mysterious land of snow. She has just met a faun who is carrying some packages and holding an umbrella.

The faun's name is Mr. Tumnus and he and Lucy become good friends.

He invites her to his home for tea and wholesome food.

There, he tells her all about his snowy land called Narnia

And the curse which the White Witch has placed on the land.

He goes on to say, she calls herself the Queen of Narnia.

Fearing that her siblings will be wondering where she is after such a long time, Lucy, with Mr. Tumnus's help finds her way back to the lamppost and then back through the wardrobe.

Narnia time we discover is not our time.

Lucy thinks she has been gone for hours, but when she stumbles out of the wardrobe – no time in this world has really passed.

Of course, her brothers and sister do not believe her as she tells the story about where she has been and who she has met.

Peter and Susan are compassionate in their disbelief.

Edmund is just plain nasty-he grows increasingly spiteful, unhappy, wrongheaded and confused. So that when he comes to step into Narnia through the wardrobe,  
Edmund has “attitude”.

Literary experts on the writings of C.S. Lewis tell us that one of Lewis’ greatest strengths as a writer,

Though not always noted,

Is his stunning ability to realistically portray wrongdoing.

The descent from temptation to transgression occurs step by step.

It does not just happen.

And Lewis is a master at describing the slow descent.

Listen again to an excerpt from another of Lewis’ books – The Screwtape Letters – letters purported to be written to a junior tempter – Wormwood – from his uncle and senior tempter – Screwtape.

If you have never read The Screwtape Letters you really must – for it so accurately describes how temptation works in everyone’s life.

When he [the one being tempted by Wormwood] Gets into his pew and looks around him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided. You want to lean pretty heavily on those neighbours, Make his mind flit to and fro between an expression like ‘the body of Christ’ and the actual faces in the next pew. It matters very little, of course what kind of people that the next pew really contains. You may know one of them to be a great warrior [a person of quiet and obedient faith in the Risen Lord of the Church] on the Enemy’s [God’s] side. No matter, Your patient, thanks to our Father below, is a fool. Provided that any of those neighbours sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous [p. 16]

Lewis realized very clearly that so often the shift from temptation to transgression or sin Often begins with the petty and seemingly innocent.

To the clip we have just seen,  
To get further information from Edmund about the possibility of more humans coming to Narnia,  
The White Witch takes on the semblance of kindness and help does she not?

To warm a cold Edmund she invites him to sit next to her in her sledge and enfolds him in her furs. She creates a warm milky drink – beware of warm milky drinks in British mystery writing – they are never good for one!

It is a drink that does not really satisfy for long and it is a contrast to the wholesome tea provided to Lucy by Mr. Tumnus,

Or the meal the Beavers will provide to Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy later in the story.

Then the Witch asks – if you could have anything dear one, what would it be.

Edmund – “Turkish delight” – several pounds of it says Lewis in the book

Edmund greedily devours it all

I remember after my first reading of TLWW and I came to the Narnia Chronicles as an adult – going out,

looking for Turkish Delight.

After sampling it, I wondered how Edmund could

- a) Greedily eat several pounds of it in a short time
- b) Why he thought it was so great as a sweet
- C) How he could sell out his siblings for the promise of more.

For I still believe Turkish delight to be an overrated, over sugared candy – an insult to those of Turkish ancestry!!

Talk about sacrificing the greater good for temporary pleasure!!

Yet, is that not how Temptation works – it often blinds us to the truth and we hear what we want to hear or what WE think we hear?

Immediate self-gratification is all that matters!

As we consider the lesson from Genesis Dan read moments ago – is not this story about rationalization and self-gratification?

The verses in Genesis are such a familiar story – they do not need retelling or an in-depth explanation of what happens.

There is no hint that the serpent is the Embodiment of principle of evil – he is **just more crafty than the other wild animals that the Lord God had made.**

The serpent introduces a new agenda.

The prohibition which seemed a *given is now* questioned and spoken about as it were an *option*.

There is a distortion of realities

A shell game is being played.

For the serpent says back God's speech in just enough of a twist to miss the point.

Though the serpent is corrected by the woman in vs.2-3,

By then the misquote has opened up an awareness --that there just may be the possibility of alternative to what God said.

God is now seen as Someone who can be worked around.

God does not really mean what God says

When confronted by God and having to admit what they have done – the blame game starts – it wasn't me, it was her...

He tricked me

In our household when our kids lived at home we had more than one appearance of a creature called "someone else".

It was someone else's fault that the plate broke,  
the toy wasn't picked up  
the door was left open in the middle of winter...

The ability to rationalize, self-deceive, blame others what is clearly our fault is incredibly strong – which is why temptation ending in sin can sometimes take years to discover and unpack.

So many of us are experts at covering up or justifying ungodly behavior.

And let's be clear – temptation that becomes sin is not exclusively of a sensual or sexual nature.

Edmund was tempted to betray his siblings by pleasures of Turkish Delight.

Adam and Eve were tempted to disobey God with the words **you will be like God.**

We can be tempted to gossip – because others just need to know.

We can be tempted to lie because we NEED to look good.

We can be tempted to hold onto a grudge because we cannot release the matter to God

We can be tempted to always be right because we cannot admit that maybe, just maybe we might be wrong.

Well, if temptation to transgression or sin is always with us – and it is! Temptation is inevitable in this world

What valuable counsel does James (this morning's reading) offer to God's people in facing and dealing with it in a Godly way?

**No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one (James 1:13)**

Temptation is never directed by God.

God permits it to be sure, but He never directs it

Like Adam and Eve in the garden,

It is you and I who have disobeyed and given in to the temptation.

**Vs. 14 one is tempted by one's own desire.**

There is within each of us a very deep well of dominating and alluring desires.

It is part of being human

It is also part of falling short of the glory of God

It is the human condition

But not everyone is tempted to transgression by the same things.

For example,

I am not tempted to gamble – I won't even buy a lottery ticket. I will help support the cause, but I will not take the ticket.

Why?

I know I will never win.

The house always wins – someone else always wins  
I know a lot of people who are convinced that the next card dealt or the next time the button is pushed on a slot machine – winner, winner, chicken dinner.

**Vs.14-15 – temptation that leads to sin always follows the same over all process.**

Here I find writer, preacher and teacher Chuck Swindoll's analogy particular good.

He sees the word entice (vs 14) similar to one used by fishermen to catch fish...

- Step 1 – the bait is dropped. The temptation, whatever it is – is enticingly placed in front of us
- Step 2 – the inner desire is attracted to the bait. The temptation to transgression is fully active.
- Step 3 – occurs when we like the fish and the bait -we yield – we give in – we go after the bait.
- Step 4 – we latch onto the bait – as a fish chomps down on the bait – but there is a hook on the bait isn't there.

In like fashion, there is some sort of hook that catches us and draws us in – the temptation is no longer innocent and just there – we have gone farther down the road as it were.

We are hooked

And like the hooked fish with the bait – the consequences for us are never good!!

Now James does not here in this text  
Give specific counsel about dealing with temptation  
in this life.

But the counsel is in the scriptures

Permit me to mention only three ways to counter  
inevitable temptation in our lives.

*Keep watch over your thought life.*

For all temptation to transgression finds its  
beginning in our hearts, minds and souls.

Like Edmund in the book – I believe negative,  
complaining, fault-finding, judgmental and carping  
people are far more susceptible to moving from  
temptation to transgression than those individuals  
who cultivate attitudes of thankfulness to God,

Wonder,

Gratitude, humility and mercy.

*Use the right resistance.*

If your weak area are things of a sensual  
nature – walk away – or run away from the  
presence of those things

Be Joseph in the house of Potiphar –there came a point when he could no longer be in the same house as the Potiphars owing to Mrs. Potiphar constantly inviting Joseph to “come to bed with me”

*Depend upon God.* The inevitability of temptation in this life ought to trigger in our minds the need to depend upon God to help us face the world’s temptations.

We cannot, nor did God ever mean for us to face temptation in and of our own strength.

There is just too much “bait being dropped all around us” to handle all by ourselves.

*To move from temptation to transgression has consequences.*

The voices of the world will seek to convince us otherwise.

But know that the enjoyment of transgression – whatever it is is fleeting and very temporary.

There is no long term satisfaction – either for our souls or our bodies.

Witness Edmund and the Turkish delight – little if any sense of satisfaction in having enough

And blinded to the consequences that he had betrayed not only his siblings, but also Mr. Tumnus and later the Beavers.

Is Edmund happy or content? Anything but and it will take the action of Aslan to undo Edmund’s wrong.

This morning, we are about to feast not on Turkish delight, but on symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus.

And unlike the Turkish Delight of TLWW full of empty calories and too much sweetness, this is a meal of substance.

A meal that does satisfy.

For among other things, it is a meal that reminds us of the lavish love of God in sending his son, Jesus Christ for us!

For all that Jesus did for us – all time and all people  
It is a meal that reminds us that someday the Risen Lord of time and history will stand before us, and we shall see him as clearly as we see each other right now.

It is a meal of thanksgiving, gratitude, hope and promise.

So come to the Table in a few moments – not because it is I who invite you.

This is the Lord's Table and he invites all those who trust in Him to share the feast he has prepared...

AMEN