

“Leaving Complacency Behind”

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Complacency: *“a feeling of quiet pleasure or security, often while unaware of some potential danger, defect, or the like.”*

When you're complacent, you really aren't worried about anything because you don't see anything else as a problem or important! It's been said that complacency doesn't necessarily look for the best, but looks for the easy!

Martin Luther, when he wrote *“A Mighty Fortress is Our God”* wanted us to make sure we understand that we're faced with dangers all around us, and it's important that we don't get complacent. Listen to his words from one of the verses from the hymn, *“Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us.”*

Really? Do you think about that as you go about your daily routine? Probably not, but then again, if there were no forces of evil, you wouldn't need Jesus, would you? This Lent we're talking about God calling us home. You and I are on a journey toward heaven. When you travel, there are some things you need to leave at home. You need to travel lighter. Max Lucado even wrote a book a couple years ago named *“Traveling Light”*, which talked about getting rid of burdens and worries and relying on God.

This morning, let's talk about complacency. **Let's leave complacency behind.** We need to stop living for the easy and look to do what's right and according to God's Will. **One reason for complacency is compartmentalizing your life.** Compartmentalizing is doing the God-thing on Sundays; maybe even give up chocolate or something for Lent, and for the rest of the time, go with the flow.

Compartmentalizing allows us to not look at the big picture of how God is to be a part of everything. It allows us to disregard God's Will and direction: unethical financial dealings, office flirtation, secret addictions, running down your friends and neighbors. To be involved in these kinds of things is not hard to do when you compartmentalize.

The problem is, and when I say “problem,” I mean big time, eternal problem! The problem is that compartmentalizing, transferring God to this Sunday box, is sure to result in complacency. **Complacency jeopardizes your salvation.**

God wants more from us than just casual following and faith. He wants us to be totally devoted to Him! He never promised it would be easy, but as we walk continually by faith in Jesus Christ, and His cross and empty tomb, God promises we will be in His Kingdom forever! James 1:12, *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”*

The opposite of complacency is internal conflict. God's calling us home, and in a strange way, God's call home causes us internal conflict. **The internal conflict we struggle with, or at least should struggle with, is the conflict between our natural desires and the clear words of God.**

This internal conflict started in the Garden of Eden as Satan tempted Eve to eat of the fruit. When asked, Eve told Satan that God told them not to eat of the tree. Just as Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he said, *“Did God actually say . . .”* Jesus stood strong in God's Word and gave the answers that showed God's power.

Listen again to James 1:14-15 as it talks about the temptations from Satan we face each and every day, *“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”*

When Jesus was tempted, the devil said, *“If you are the Son of God . . .”* The devil can lead us to rationalize any kind of behavior our unholy desires want. We so many times rationalize, compartmentalize, and follow our heart’s desires. If you don’t see the conflict between your heart and God, please know that God does!

From Genesis 6:5, *“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* From Romans 8:7, *“The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law”*.

How wonderful then that Jesus comes and says, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

Jesus isn’t taking away the internal struggle of Christian living. He’s not accepting complacency, just the opposite. Baptism calls us to intense self-reflection. Ask yourself, *“in what areas of my life have I compartmentalized God?”* Jesus comes to us, as He came into Galilee in today’s Gospel. He invited the people and He invites us to believe in the Gospel of God.

The Gospel is such a precious gift. How can you hear it and not pray the Holy Spirit to help you believe and not leave complacency behind? David said in Psalm 51, *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me”*. That needs to be our sincere prayer always!

Jesus was baptized to show His identity with us sinners. Jesus has no sin; He doesn’t need the forgiveness of sins. He had John baptize Him to show that He’s with us. When He was baptized, a voice came from heaven, *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* And then, this is important, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. That’s the internal conflict we’re talking about!

Jesus never wavered in His total commitment to His Father, but Jesus knew the struggle against the devil and all the forces of evil. Unlike Jesus, you and I were born in sin and have evil down in our baptized heart. Like Jesus we struggle against it. St. Paul was very inwardly critical when he said, *“I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate”*.

We struggle against evil in our hearts, and struggle against the devil, but we have the help of the Holy Spirit to stand faithful! You’re not saved by your internal struggle, but your internal struggle is a sign of the Spirit’s presence, a positive sign that God’s grace is getting down into the sinful depths of your heart!

As Luther continued that verse, *“Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none. He’s judged, the deed is done; one little word can fell him.”* And what is that *“one little word”*? Luther says it’s *“liar.”* Devil, you’re a liar!

With faith and confidence say, *“I’m leaving complacency behind and committing myself to Jesus Christ, my Savior!”* May this be your commitment this Lent and every day!