

Letters from Lucifer

Feb. 13, 2005

First Sunday in Lent

Matthew 4:1-11, Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Let's set aside this morning the question "Is there a devil or not?" and the question "Is the serpent in Genesis the same as the devil?" and engage our imaginations. Whether we believe in an actual devil or in impersonal forces of evil, or in evil coming from our own hearts or as the dreadful absence of God, the letters I'm going to share with you this morning will be instructive in the power and the insidious nature of temptation and in ways to resist it. So let's travel with our imagination to Hades and listen carefully at Lucifer's chief lieutenant Diabla speaks:

"Gather around you monstrous maggots, you venomous vassals of our dark lord. As you know, our fiendish father is on an important journey to earth. He has sent us letters recording his progress. Unfortunately, that toad Sly Tongue, through sloth and waywardness did not get the first letters to us in a timely fashion--so all three have arrived at once. (He is being suitably punished) When I read the opening lines of first letter, it became clear that it would behoove me to assemble you and read the letters straight away. So listen carefully to the wise words of our dreadful leader:"

To Wormwood and all minions of my kingdom, greetings.

As you all know, about 30 years ago the Enemy embarked on a strange and risky scheme. Having the son come to earth might be a good plan, but having him come **AS A HUMAN CREATURE**, was, in my opinion, a most foolhardy act. It seemed to me then, and it continues to appear, that by doing this the Enemy is just playing into our hands. All I have to do is get

him to succumb to temptation and the Enemy will, I believe, finally be defeated. (Of course, we can never know for sure, but I believe this last move of his is his ultimate, best plan for winning back these pesky human creatures.)

As you know, I was very successful in tempting the first human creatures. I take great pride in the intelligence and skill I used in that encounter. I'm sure I've shared with you many times the strategies I used at that time, but in case there are some new imps among you who have not heard the story I'll mention a few of the highlights.

First I waited until I had one of them alone. Two or more humans who are really trying to be faithful and obedient to the Enemy are a more difficult matter. The Enemy puts great stock by this mysterious thing called "fellowship" or "community." I can't see what possibly difference it makes to these creatures to be together, but it seems somehow to strengthen and encourage them.

Second, I tempted them with something that was, in itself, good. Of course everything the Enemy makes is good. Only we and humans distort and mar creation. So the fruit of the forbidden tree was good. It was the act of eating it--the act of disobeying, that was bad. I began by emphasizing the fruits goodness, trying to imply that eating something so good couldn't possibly be bad.

Third, I played on the human desire to be in control--to be God. And, at the same time I lied. (A well-placed lie often helps in this business.) "Eat the fruit, I said, and you'll become like God."

And then Eve did my work for me; she gave some of the fruit to Adam. Isn't it marvelous how often through the centuries, these creatures have done our work for us?

And then they committed another sin, one that their progeny hardly recognize as a sin, and one I didn't even have to suggest--they hid from God. They saw themselves for what they really were and they purposely separated themselves. The silly creatures are still doing this--once they've done something wrong they try to hide from God. Knowing their faults and frailties they don't believe that God could love them. This, of course, is one of our greatest assets. WE can't imagine why the Enemy would love such miserable, hopeless creatures. They can't imagine why either. Of course they Enemy does love them--deeply and completely, even when they're weak and sinful. (That's another of those incomprehensible things about the Enemy.)

Of course the Enemy found them. They and their progeny had to endure the consequences of their sin, but the Enemy continued to care for them.

After I had done this great work--established our "beachhead" so to speak, I left most of the rest of the work to you, my vassals. Sometimes, thanks to my leading and direction, you did exceedingly well. Sometimes, due to your on stupidity and bumbling, you botched things up.

But this time the stakes are too high. This situation, this Son of the Enemy walking the earth as a Human, is too important. I had to take matters into my own hands. And it occurred to me that I could sent you reports on how it is going. That way you can learn from my success.

For 30 years I have been biding my time--waiting for the right moment. I believe it has finally come. This Jesus is just coming down from a high moment. When his cousin baptized him, the Enemy spoke. I, of course, couldn't hear the words, but they obviously had a profound effect. To my surprise, he went straight from there to the desert. Now, in spite of what I said about Eve, getting a human creature alone can be good, but isn't the best of situations. As you well know, getting them with a bunch of creatures who already have succumbed to us is best. Second best is taking them to a public place--a village market, or a crowded city street, and suggesting that what they see around them is true reality, is the very best way to corrupt them. Tempting a human who is alone in nature, especially a human who belongs to the Enemy is difficult, but I believe I'm up to the challenge.

One advantage I had is that he chose to stay out there for 40 days. True, he was fasting and praying, but all that fasting made him weak and hungry. These humans are affected by their bodies, so the opportune time has come.

My first gambit was very like the one I tried on Eve, but, I'm always good at using whatever is at hand, and the warm brown stones around us looked very much like bread. "You're hungry," I whispered. And you're God's son--you have the power--turn these stones to bread. Bread is good. Your God created bread. God doesn't want you to be hungry. You need to eat to regain your strength, so you can minister to your people. suspecting that Jesus was out here in the desert trying to decide how to go about his life work, I gave it an extra and appealing twist. Besides, If you turn the stones to bread, think of all the hungry people you can feed."

He just sat there, for awhile, staring at the stones. Then he looked up and quoted scripture. "Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that

preceedeth from God.” What a hindrance those pesky scriptures are to our work!

Well, Jesus has won the first round, but I am not really discouraged. I still have a few tricks to try. You will be hearing from me again, soon.

Your resourceful Lord, Lucifer.

“Hmmm, well, let’s turn to the second letter.”

Greetings to you all,

I decided to take another tack, one that has worked magnificently with some of the eminent leaders through the years. I would work on the very human desire to be famous--to be admired. And I would show this Jesus that I too, knew and could quote scripture. I took him to the pinnacle of the temple--the best place, after all for a “religious” leader to make an impression. More importantly, my plan would allow him to attract the multitudes I was sure he wanted to reach. I said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”

He stood up and gazed down at the courtyard below, then up into the cloudless sky. The wind ruffled his hair as he responded, again with scripture, “Again it is written. Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” I begin to be annoyed not only with this running back to scripture, but even more, with its persistent reference to his relation to the Enemy.

But all is not lost. You will hear from me again soon.

Lucifer.

“And here is the final letter:”

Maledictions! curses! Cauldrons of fire and brimstone on his ungrateful head. I cannot remember when I have been so angry! I actually offered this simpleton the world! I took him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. I paraded their splendor before him. I showed him how he could have the power to rule everyone--everyone! He could have commanded everyone, he could have ruled in the name of religion if he wanted. I didn't care, if only he would worship me. But he turned me down. He persists in this crazy idea the Enemy has of a kingdom of love rather than power. And he actually sent me away! He said “Away with you!” before he gave me another of those syrupy scriptures about his relation to the Enemy. “It is written,” he said “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

Before I left I saw his countenance change. He began to smile, and I suspected that angels were approaching (we of course can never quite see them).

I returning shortly. I am not done with this Jesus, not yet. The stakes are too high. But I would advise you all to be performing your tasks extremely well. I am in the mood to vent my ire somewhere.

Lucifer.