

## Lent 1A - 2020

There's the old line about when God confronted Adam and Eve with their misbehavior and Adam pointed to Eve and said, "The woman made me do it." Eve pointed to the snake and said, "The snake made me do it." And, of course, the snake didn't have a leg to stand on!

Henry Snowden pulled in to the drive-up window at the local Burger King. He ordered, paid for his meal, and eased away from the window. When he finally pulled over to eat, he got the shock of his life.

There was nothing wrong with his burger or fries. His drink was cold and good. But the clerk working at the window had shoved two bags out the window at the 31-year-old man. Snowden discovered \$4,170 in the second bag. And you thought it was another fast-food franchise that dispensed "happy meals," didn't you! What happened was a mistake by a store employee and a challenge to Henry Snowden's character.

The particular Burger King in question puts its day's receipts in one of the same bags it uses for food orders. The idea is to have an inconspicuous burger bag rather than an inviting bank deposit bag sitting there in case of a robbery attempt. But the clerk working the window that fateful day mistakenly reached over and picked up both Snowden's bag and the deposit bag a store manager had just plopped down.

What was the response when Snowden opened the second bag and found all the money? He knew that taking it back to the restaurant would be the right thing to do. "But I've got to admit I was definitely tempted!" he said. So he returned the money Saturday morning.

"I'm glad I was able to do the right thing," he said. "And I feel better than I've ever felt." A good conscience will do that for a person!

We are surrounded by temptations on every side.

The beauty of the Internet? . . .It contains everything.  
The curse of the Internet? . . . It contains everything.  
At the touch of a button, good information is available.

At the touch of a button, here is an endless supply of garbage, gossip, pornography, violence, and hate.

Cell phones keep us in touch no matter where we are.  
Yet cell phones tempt us to never be anywhere except on the phone.

A first car gives its recipient freedom, responsibility and great possibilities.  
But a first car also tempts a young driver to head to the mall instead of the library, to drive too fast, to show-off at the wheel.

You can come up with your own candidates for proof of how our culture is packed with options that are both possibilities and pitfalls.  
Here is my candidate for the #1 temptation we indulge in most regularly:  
The temptation to gloat and glory over the fall of others..

The season of Lent is supposed to be a time of serious spiritual searching and renewal. It is a time for self-scrutiny and re-dedication to a life of service and, if need be, suffering in the cause of the kingdom. It is a time of preparation for the passion of Christ.

How then has it become a time to give up chocolate, or hamburgers, or video games? What have we done?

The temptation or "tests" that the devil flung at Jesus after his forty-day-fast in the wilderness weren't just challenges to DO something he wasn't supposed to do.

They were challenges tempting Jesus to BE someone he was not born to be.  
The Temptation to "Be" Something Other than Our True Selves.

### **The Strong Timber Is Tested**

A group of mountain hikers came across an old woodsman with an axe on his shoulder. "Where are you going?" they asked him. "I'm headed up the mountain to get some wood to repair my cabin," replied the woodsman. "But why are you going up the mountain?" they asked incredulously. "There are plenty of trees all around us here." "I know," he said, "but I need strong timber and it grows only on the highest elevations, where the trees are tested and toughened by the weather around them. The higher up you go,

the stronger the timber grows." And that is what God desires for us - that through the winds of trial and the storms of temptation we would grow strong and live on a higher level - strong to resist the devil's urging, strong to serve God, and strong as we stand together in faith and service to one another. (by Lee Griess from *Return to The Lord, Your God*, CSS Publishing Company, Inc.)