

## Thought for Wednesday – May 13, 2009

Last weekend as Karen and I were racking the Fall leaves so they could be disposed of in the Spring neighborhood clean-up one of our children came running up to us that our dog, “Buddy” – Yeah, I know for all of you who have see “Elf...” But this Buddy won’t answer the phone and ask you what your favorite color is!

Anyway, one of the girls runs up to us and says that Buddy has a “tumor” on his back that’s sticking up through his fur. Not a good sign, right? So, the family takes a gander at Buddy’s back and discover that what looks like a tumor actually turns out to be a tick. By now, a rather engorged tick (think blood-sucking parasite) Karen and I are trying to think of what to do next when the tick falls off of Buddy’s back, remember, he’s “full” now and just wants to find a place to nap – Who could blame the little guy (or girl). Well, being the “man of the house” and “the Father” I do what any red-blooded (no pun) guy would do – I take matters into my own hands and with a deadly weapon in my hand (a garden trowel) I quickly dispose of Mr./Mrs. Tick

Why do I bring this up? Well, something I didn’t get to share over the weekend, because of time restraint is this – And I admit, it’s going to perhaps a bold statement. Here it is. Don’t miss it: *The greatest problem facing human beings today is temptation!* Not war, or famine, or natural/man-made disaster – Our biggest problem *isn’t* a circumstance, but a matter of the heart = temptation!

If we weren’t tempted, it would be extremely difficult to get into trouble – If we didn’t get into trouble wars wouldn’t start, starvation wouldn’t exist, we wouldn’t take things not ours or hurt the people we love the most, including ourselves! Because, the greatest challenge you and I are facing, is the temptation to do and be and say things that we shouldn’t, aren’t and will damage other people!

That’s why I’m so thankful for the verse we looked at this past weekend – 1 Corinthians 10:13: *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

Follow me with this for a minute: Picture Cold Stone Creamery on Broadway...

Suppose I’m driving down Broadway and I see a Cold Stone Creamery. The sight of that shop causes me to think about it. As I begin to think about their German Chokolatcake or the Mud Pie Mojo, I imagine myself ordering one of those. So, I decide that that’s what I’m going to do. I decide to park my car and go into the shop and Mud Pie Mojo...

Are you following me?

I go into the shop. I order Mud Pie Mojo; I take the bowl from the clerk, I dip my spoon into the Coffee Ice Cream mixed with Oreo, Peanut Butter Roasted Almonds and Fudge, I put the spoon in my mouth, and I swallow.

Got that?

Now, for the sake of analogy, suppose that eating Ice Cream is a sin. It's the little-known 11th commandment, "Thou shall not eat ice cream." Okay? Let's review the steps I took, and you tell me "A", when temptation began for me, "B", when I gave in to temptation, and "C", when I actually committed the sin of eating or coveting yogurt...

1. I SAW THE COLD STONE CREAMERY
2. I THOUGHT ABOUT THE ICE CREAM
3. I IMAGINED MYSELF ORDERING MUD PIE MOJO
4. I IMAGINE MYSELF EATING THE MUD PIE MOJO
5. I REVEL IN EATING THE MUD PIE MOJO
6. I DECIDED TO ORDER A MUD PIE MOJO
7. I PARKED AND WENT INTO COLD STONE CREAMERY
8. I ORDERED MUD PIE MOJO
9. I TOOK THE MUD PIE MOJO FROM THE CLERK
10. I DIPPED MY SPOON INTO THE MUD PIE MOJO
11. I PUT THE SPOON WITH MUD PIE MOJO INTO MY MOUTH
12. I SWALLOWED THE MUD PIE MOJO

Now, other than making you want Cold Stone Ice Cream (in particular, Mud Pie Mojo) Where in the process did temptation being? Probably at step 4. The first three steps are all neutral. They're what our brains do. If I drive past a mailbox and see a mail box, I naturally think about the box and getting the mail. I can't help myself. I'm only tempted to pick up the mail once I imagine myself doing so.

All right, in the Cold Stone Creamery analogy, when did I give in to temptation? Almost definitely at step 5. This is when it became real for me. I began indulging in it in my mind. And when did I actually sin by eating the ice cream? Not until step 11, maybe 12, but most likely 11 because once I've got the spoon in myself, it's inevitable that I'll swallow some of the ice cream.

I bring this up, because this is the process our minds go through with every decision we make. The steps may happen quickly, in micro-seconds, but they don't happen instantaneously. The key, then, to keeping the parasites away from us, happens first in our minds, then in our actions.

The Apostle Paul said...

*"We take every thought captive to the will of Christ..."* (2 Corinthians 10:5)

*"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever his lovely. Whatever is admirable – If anything is excellent or praiseworthy – Think about such things."* (Philippians 4:8)

Be Strong, Be Courageous, Be Fearless – and remember...

Christ **IS** All!

**Pastor Mark**