

Sunday October 20th, 2019
Poverty Action Day

PRAYER:

Loving Creator, you made all people in your image and likeness.
Help us to realise that all men and women are people of great worth and dignity.
Give us the strength and courage to work for justice and peace, so that all
People may be able to live according to the dignity you gave them.
We ask you this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE: Brothers and sisters, “continue in what you have learned and firmly believe, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” For the truth of the gospel abides. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

OFFERTORY SENTENCE: God is the source of all goodness, power, and strength, we come with gifts in response to your love. God has poured out his goodness; therefore, we bring our God thanksgiving. God infuses us with power; we in response, offer the fruits of our labour. God sustains us with strength; and all that we do we dedicate to God’s glory. Let us now present to the Lord with gladness our tithes and offerings.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Righteous Father, please forgive us for not being there when we should have for that person who turned to drugs for comfort. Forgive us for judging and condemning those who are addicted. Forgive us for overlooking opportunities to show love and compassion to the hurting families who are suffering from the effects of addiction. Forgive those who are addicted for turning to something unholy for help instead of turning to you. Forgive them for not responding to the voice of wisdom and making unhealthy choices in life. Forgive those of us who have at one time, knowingly or unknowingly, contributed to the cause of another’s addiction. Lord, forgive me for (list any sins that You have committed). Holy Spirit, remind those who are addicted of all those they need to forgive and help them to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. (Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you names or faces of people that You may need to forgive. As He shows you, say aloud, “I forgive name of person(s).” Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by forgiveness.)

[Crystal Ayres](#)

There are so many things to be addicted to in this world...so many enticing things that people cling to, even if that thing is destroying them. we pray against addiction and claim freedom! We pray protection over each of our lives, over husbands, over our family and our friends! May your power Lord rescue those who need an intervention, those too weak to resist the enemy. May your power be sufficient and may people find hope amidst a dark world. Please Lord, we cry out to You, break the chains of addiction, sexual addiction, alcohol addiction, drug addiction, lying, stealing, cheating, dishonoring, or idolizing! Holy Spirit rains down, cleanse us, and let your grace restore us in Jesus’ name AMEN! [Crystal Ayres](#)

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2 Samuel 12:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 10:9-13

“Strengthening Our Resolve”

I confess that there is one kind of television show I do not like at all; and really try to avoid. This despite certain people near and dear to me who love them. I apologize if I am maligning one of your beloved television escapes, but I don't get it. I am absolutely stunned that “Survivor” is now in its 29th season. “Big Brother” is still running, and it is still ridiculous. The Bachelor and Bachelorette; please. None of these reality shows are in actual fact, reality.

Recently there was one “reality show” in particular that pushed the envelop of logic. Were you tempted to watch the recent reality TV show “Temptation Island?” One magazine described the show this way: “The fabulously tacky Fox network has come up with the most fabulously tacky reality TV show of them all: ‘Temptation Island.’ Four hapless couples romp with two-dozen babes and hunks on a Caribbean Island for fun, humiliation and profit.

“(The) four couples — each with some strains in their relationship — are sent to a Caribbean island. There they are separated by gender and left for two weeks in the titillating company of members of the opposite sex, the gals babealiciously comely, the boys hunkariffically handsome. Will the couples remain true to each other? Or will island instincts take over?”
(<http://www.salon.com/ent/tv/temptation/>, 3/8/2001)

It's not really much of a plot, but it made for voyeuristic fun for millions of viewers. In the end, though they were tempted, none of the four couples chose to leave their partner. It was lousy TV, but it put the word “temptation” back in everybody's vocabulary. The truth is, we all live on Temptation Island. Ours is not a Temptation Island; it's a Temptation World. And only the Bible tells us how to deal with it.

Verse 13 tell us that temptation is a common human experience. But not all of us respond to it in the right way. Oscar Wilde once said, “The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.” (Ministers Manual for 1995, p. 262) In another place, he said, “I can resist everything except temptation” (Lady Windermere's Fan).

The book of James tells us that temptation does not come from God. “Let no man say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God,” for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. Don't be deceived, my beloved brothers” (James 1:13-16).

Contemporary author Peter Gomes contends that “temptation is the single greatest source of human anxiety. In the thousands of people with whom I have counseled over the years of my ministry, I have found the problem of temptation to be at the heart of their personal anxiety” (The Good Book, p. 267, quoted in Minister's Manual for 2000, p. 167) If everyone is tempted, what is the difference between temptation and sin? Martin Luther once said that temptation is like a bird flying over our head.

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No one can prevent that from happening. But sin is when we let the bird build a nest in our hair!

In my office there is a little magnetic plaque given to me while I served in Toronto that reads, “Lead me not into temptation: I can find it myself.” There is some real truth in this little expression. I was thinking about the reasons why we give into temptation, especially given our focus today on addiction and its relationship with poverty. And just to clarify, addictions are a much broader subject than substance abuse.

Addictions include a wide range of human behaviours like: gambling, food, sexuality, and even how we are addicted to technology. Not every addiction leads to poverty, but they all have the potential to do so. Nor dare we become smug in our self-assurance that we are not prone to temptation; for Paul tells us that all temptations are common to everyone. In approaching this difficult subject of addictions, we must be compassionate, for all of us are prone.

So, where do these addiction issues come from? Many people use substances such as drugs or alcohol to relax, have fun, experiment, or cope with stressors, however, for some people the use of substances or engaging in certain behaviours can become problematic and may lead to dependence. Addiction is a complex process where problematic patterns of substance use or behaviours can interfere with a person’s life.

Addiction can be broadly defined as a condition that leads to a compulsive engagement with stimuli, despite negative consequences. This can lead to physical and/or psychological dependence. Addictions can be either substance related (such as the problematic use of alcohol or cocaine) or process-related, also known as behavioural addictions (such as gambling or internet addiction).

A simple way of understanding and describing addiction is to use the **4C’s** approach:

- **Craving**
- Loss of **control** of amount or frequency of use
- **Compulsion** to use
- Continued substance use despite **consequences**

The word "addiction" is derived from a Latin term for "enslaved by" or "bound to." Anyone who has struggled to overcome an addiction — or has tried to help someone else to do so — understands why. Addiction exerts a long and powerful influence on the brain that manifests in three distinct ways: craving for the object of addiction, loss of control over its use, and continuing involvement with it despite adverse consequences. While overcoming addiction is possible, the process is often long, slow, and complicated. It took years for researchers and policymakers to arrive at this understanding.

In the 1930s, when researchers first began to investigate what caused addictive behavior, they believed that people who developed addictions were somehow morally flawed or lacking in willpower. Overcoming addiction, they thought, involved punishing miscreants or, alternately, encouraging them to muster the will to break a habit. The scientific consensus has changed since then.

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Today we recognize addiction as a chronic disease that changes both brain structure and function. Just as cardiovascular disease damages the heart and diabetes impairs the pancreas, addiction hijacks the brain. Recovery from addiction involves willpower, certainly, but it is not enough to "just say no" — as the 1980s slogan suggested. Instead, people typically use multiple strategies — including psychotherapy, medication, and self-care — as they try to break the grip of an addiction.

Another shift in thinking about addiction has occurred as well. For many years, experts believed that only alcohol and powerful drugs could cause addiction. Neuroimaging technologies and more recent research, however, have shown that certain pleasurable activities, such as gambling, shopping, and sex, can also co-opt the brain. Although the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition* (DSM-IV) describes multiple addictions, each tied to a specific substance or activity, consensus is emerging that these may represent multiple expressions of a common underlying brain process.

My intention was not to give a primer on addiction this morning, but to alert us all to the reality that folks in our community and maybe even sitting here today are dealing with on a daily basis. Often none of us know what a family member, a neighbour or even ourselves are dealing with until there is a serious crisis, requiring intervention from health professionals, the police, or therapists.

If the Apostle Paul is right, and I am convinced he is, we need to come to a healthier respect, and a more redemptive response to those coping with this illness. If addiction is an illness, our response should be just as compassionate as it would be if someone were coping with cancer, heart disease, and any number of chronic or acute health crises. To not respond or to respond with indifference can be catastrophic to the one suffering from addiction, and their families.

One of the first steps to being Christlike to our neighbours and even family members who are struggling is to understand how addiction and poverty is changing our community. Since addiction actually alters our brain chemistry, recovery from an addiction can be quite difficult and a very lengthy process. This means for example that emergency housing is often required for those too ill to work or finding themselves homeless.

We have in Simcoe 8 beds through the Ash program which allows residents to remain for one year in supportive housing, but the need is far greater. Access to a psychiatrist is very difficult in Norfolk and the waitlist can be many weeks or months long. Then there is the whole issue of documentation. Some fighting with addiction, find themselves without health cards or expired cards, not to mention the required documents to secure rental housing.

Many who struggle report that they feel socially isolated. Often in recovery, a person has burned all their social bridges with family and friends. Loneliness make recovery considerably more difficult, and compounds the anxiety that draws someone back into addiction. Social stigma can also compound the recovery process. What we often fail to understand is that someone in the recovery process is often too fragile to be employed immediately. The physical and emotional effort to recover demands 100% of a person's attention and energy. You cannot be lazy and recover from an addiction.

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“It is very hard for people in recovery to ask for help but the system is set up for askers”. This quote refers to the fact that even when there are supports (and in some cases quite a few supports), people aren’t informed that the support is even available. For example, one individual talked about turning 65 and receiving CPP. On CPP, he was receiving between \$700-\$800/month. Then he was told about OAS. When he finally applied, his monthly income went up to just over \$1000/month.

Then a friend told him about GIS. When he finally learned about GIS, he received quite a large lump sum as back pay and now has about \$1700/month in income. The group discussed how it would be nice if once they accessed a service, they were informed of all that the service has to offer as well as to be given information about other relevant supports and services.

And what about poverty. The rate of poverty in Simcoe is 17.2% of the population. That’s scary figure considering the provincial rate is 14.4%. And just so we are clear; no one is getting rich on Ontario works or disability payments. A single person on OW receives \$733 per month. A couple receives \$1136 per month a there are small increases if there are children in the home. ODSP payments are higher at \$1169 for a single person and \$1894 for a couple and again with improvements if children are in the home.

Even on minimum wage the challenges are great for families. At \$14 per hour and a 35-hour week, a person’s take home runs at about \$1960 a month before taxes. And most of these jobs have little to no benefits. In Norfolk a bachelor’s apartment runs at about \$605 a month with a one bedroom at \$744; if you can find one. Utilities can run on average about \$200 and \$200 for food, and it is easy to see why food banks, RISE, First Serving etc. are vital programs.

And how about transportation to work, or medical appointments. Taxis are costly, and unreliable for an accurate pick up time and if a person can own a car, it is usually an older vehicle requiring more maintenance. And what about daycare so a parent can even go to work? How is that for a reality that we will never see on a television program. This is the reality for many in our community; actually 17% of us.

So, here is my point in all this information. As Paul says, we are all prone to temptation, and some of us in giving into that temptation fall pretty hard. As Tony Campolo points out; the church is very good at being Good Samaritans. I know we mess up from time to time but generally we do pretty well. However, as good as our Good Samaritan activities are, all we really are doing is patching people up and sending them back into the system again.

Campolo points out that in the parable of the Good Samaritan we find a good man who rescues someone on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. A man who was ambushed by thieves and beaten to near death. We know from the story that the Good Samaritan bandages up the man, takes him to a inn and pays for him to be cared for until he is recovered. It is a moving story and it motivates us to act similarly.

The good Samaritan did the right thing but take the story further and ask yourself; what if every day or two someone else was attacked on that same road? If this happens enough, there comes a point when being a good Samaritan is not enough.

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At some point we will realize that action is needed to stop the carnage on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. Maybe we demand of the government more patrols along that stretch of road or better lighting if it happened today. In short it is not enough to just care for the casualties of the system, as good as that is, but sooner or later we have to challenge the system that creates so many casualties in the first place. (Tell Me a Story, p.115-116)

God's people are to be a rescue squad. That's a marvelous thing. But our call is to be light and salt in our community. Both these commodities represent influence; influence for the better. Our call is to speak for those who cannot speak; or who are ignored when they do speak. Our call is to address the spiritual, economic and social ills that are destroying lives, right here in Norfolk.

So, issues like affordable housing, food security, social inclusion, medical service access, livable wages or income; are not just the governments issues, or issues of the poor. They are our issues. God does care about how we care for the poor and marginalized, and if we are doing anything to stop the destruction of lives in our community. I hope that by hearing from Tamara today, and from what I shared with you, we can strengthen our resolve to give everyone a safe and healthy life's journey.

BENEDICTION: God our Father, we ask you to help us to imitate your Son who was concerned for the poor and needy. Help us to be on the side of the poor and to be with them as they struggle for their rights. We ask you this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.