

Desert Times, a Lenten series
“From Power-Over to Power-Under”
For the week of March 4, 2018
New City Church of LA

GROW & SERVE GROUP GUIDE

Start with Prayer

Get to Know One Another: If you could spend a day in someone else’s shoes, whose would they be? Why?

Discuss Your Serve Portion

Reflecting on the Sermon

Last Sunday, we looked at the second temptation of Jesus, the temptation for the power. The devil tempted Jesus with power over all the kingdom of the world if Jesus bowed down and worshipped him. This is a temptation to use the power-over, the coercive power of government, to accomplish the goal of transforming the world, instead of the power of the cross.

At the time of Jesus, most people expected the Messiah to come and take over the Roman Empire by force. But, Jesus refused. There are fundamental differences between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world.

Kingdom of the World	Kingdom of God
Sword	Cross
Power-Over -law and order -justice -external behavior control	Power-Under -sacrificial service - <i>agape</i> love -grace
Changed by external power: -threat/judgment/shame/social pressure	Transformed by internal transformation: -influential but non-coercive power of sacrificial love as the Holy Spirit works in people’s heart
Trust in the power of the sword	Trust in the power of the cross
Purpose is to control behavior	Purpose is to transform life from the heart

But, Jesus refused to submit to the temptation for power-over (the power of the sword) but submitted to the power-under (the power of the cross).

We are often tempted with the same temptation. Personally, we are tempted to put power above love. Sometimes, there is a temptation to use anger, intimidation, violence, coercion, harassment, abusive or inconsiderate words, all in the name of getting good things done. It is so easy to fall into this temptation because it is much easier than the hard work of love.

As a church, we are also tempted to accomplish good things through the ways of the Kingdom of the world instead of the ways of the Kingdom of God. When the church, the visible presence of the Kingdom of God on earth, took over the Kingdom of this world, we made a mess of both the world and the Kingdom of God. Christianity has a bad history because it started to wield the power of the sword. Having said that, the church is also called to bring the Kingdom of God down to this world not by the power of the sword, but by the power of the cross, the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

How can we resist this temptation for power? First, we have to work out the gospel of the cross and come to see that the power-under (the power of unconditional love and grace) is greater than the power-over of the sword (coercive power). Second, we have to learn to detach and discern, detach from things that get a hold of us and discern what is the most important, not only the goals but also the means to those goals. It takes wisdom and discernment.

Share one thing you learned or applied to your life from the sermon. Any questions from the sermon?

Going Deeper: Bible Study

1. Read Luke 4:5-8.
2. What was the temptation of Jesus?
3. In what ways are you tempted to use power-over instead of power-under in your personal life? (i.e., anger and coercion instead of love)
4. What ways have the church fallen into this temptation? Both historically and presently.
5. Pastor Kevin made some suggestions on how to live within two biblical principles of (1) not seeking change through the power of the sword; and (2) seeking to love our neighbors who are marginalized. He made the following suggestions:
 - Seek humility because Christians do not have a monopoly on knowing what is right and wrong.
 - Not getting pegged into liberal or conservative mode.
 - Giving room for disagreements among Christians.
 - Seeking wisdom through the desert spiritual practice of detachment and discernment.

What do you think? Do you have any other suggestions?

6. How does deeper reflection on the gospel of the cross help us resist the temptation to use power-over instead of power-under?

Share what's going on in your life.

Pray for one another, the church, and your neighborhood