



What has the Gospel of Matthew got to do with the German fairy story of Rumpelstiltskin? I didn't know either, until I started writing, but it goes something like this.

When we pray the 'Our Father', we ask not to be led into temptation. And yet Matthew implies that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert specifically for the purposes of being tempted.

It's a disturbing thought, rather like that passage in Job where God permits Satan to test Job to his limits. And yet in both cases God wins hands-down, and spiritual riches pour down from heaven.

Jesus went into that desert to spin straw into gold. He took the half-baked false promises of a fallen angel and transfigured them into divine wealth.

And yes, he really was led by the Holy Spirit into the conflict. His example tells us that every trial is God-given, or at least God-permitted.

It's an opportunity for us to take part in the redemption of the world. We are free to either reject it or accept it.

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The friend who lets us down. The job we didn't get. The date that didn't work out. The article (or painting or poem or book or project or workplace reform) that never saw the light of day. The numbing loneliness that drags us towards porn and self-abuse.

The annoying relative who tries our patience to the limit. The difficult person at work who tempts us to peevishness and low-grade grumbling. The craving for quick riches that lures us into spending money we don't have on lottery tickets.

The Friday weariness that makes us want to forget about not drinking in Lent. The delicious whiff of someone else's cigarette smoke. The smell of fried onions on fast days.

There are some temptations that require you to toughen up, implore strength from God, and then swiftly and firmly punch the devil in the face.

Others are low-grade and have a way of wearing you down until you realise what's happening - often too late.

But if we take advantage of God's offer, and unite our trials to His, even our low-grade, boring, first world temptations can be transmuted by the same divine alchemy. Every temptation resisted - no matter for how long - is a great act of worship of God.

You can be a spiritual Rumpelstiltskin. Use every temptation as a means of spinning straw into gold for the divine treasury.

All you have to do is not panic when things go wrong for you. Panic stops you remembering to turn to Jesus and say, 'Here we are in the desert - please turn my straw into gold'.

This is a temptation Jesus cannot and will not resist. He wouldn't turn stones to bread to feed Himself - but he will turn your straw into gold that will help save the world.

~ Philippa Martyr

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