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## *Why Not Eat the Oreo?*

**An Evensong meditation by the Rev. Canon David Boyd  
The First Sunday in Lent – Year A**

Around 10pm or so, the rumblings begin. I can hear something calling out to me from the kitchen. Standing in front of the pantry, I realize it's the Oreos calling my name. There are few things I love more than an Oreo with a scoop of peanut butter on top, preferably extra crunchy Jif (no, this homily is not sponsored). Breaking out the package of Oreos and grabbing the jar of peanut butter is just about a nightly ritual for me, except now in Lent. For the next forty days or so, I have declared sweets off limits, and so, each night since Ash Wednesday, I have found myself standing in front of the pantry, hearing "eat me, eat me" from behind the cabinet doors, and wondering, "What's wrong with having just one? Why shouldn't I indulge just for tonight?"

Perhaps the better question is "What's the point of Lent, anyways?", because there's nothing inherently wrong with eating an Oreo with peanut butter on top. It's not illegal, or even immoral. Praise the Lord, a close reading of scripture reveals no divine prohibition against mixing chocolate and peanut butter. And Lent is not a church-sponsored diet or weight loss program. It's not a season of punishing ourselves. At the end of the day, the thing standing between me and that Oreo, is me. So, the question remains, why not give in to a little temptation?

After forty days and forty nights fasting in the desert, with his stomach grumbling something serious, I would like to think that Jesus asked himself a similar question. Why not turn these stones into bread? Indulging his hunger would not have been some violation of divine law. Even Moses ate manna in the wilderness! In fact, none of the three temptations placed in front of Jesus seem that great a sin. Eating is a basic human need, God's glory can shine where it chooses, and I think we would all prefer a world in which Jesus was in charge. Crafty ol' Scratch even shows up with scriptural justification for giving in to these urges! While eating an oreo and worshipping the devil in exchange for power are not exactly in the same tier, in Matthew's telling of Jesus' time in the wilderness, we meet a very human, very relatable Jesus, subjected to temptation and perhaps wondering, "Why not turn these stones into Oreos?"

The answer to this question lies not with us but with God. The answer is hidden within who God is. Scripture time and time again attests to the fact that God is love. We learn through God's Word that God is relationship itself, made manifest in the mysterious dance that is the Trinity. We learn that God seeks with every ounce of his essence to be in relationship with his beloved creation. We learn that God's first dream for humanity was the Garden, that prehistoric place of perfection, where we walked with God without fear, without sin, upright and righteous. But as Genesis tells us, paradise quickly gave way to tragedy. The serpent preyed on Adam and Eve's humanity and exposed the immense difference between the Creator and the Created. By revealing the great gulf between divine life and mortal existence, it was as if the snake whispered, "How could God ever truly love creatures like you?" The serpent fostered mistrust and seduced humanity into our first temptation, our fall into who we are today, naked and afraid, utterly alone, painfully aware of our inability to live up to God's dream for us. We see in the story of the fall the fruit of our fear: a fractured, broken, distant relationship with our creator God and all of the pain and hardship that comes with that separation.

By the time of Jesus, the problem of our fear and separation has not been resolved. In the wilderness, Satan offers to satisfy three human cravings not unlike Adam and Eve's hunger for forbidden knowledge in the garden. In stones turned bread, the tempter offers self-sufficiency and independence. On top of the temple, Satan offers daredevil fame. Looking out over the whole world, the Great Deceiver promises temporal power in exchange for abandoning God. Independence, fame, and power. If we believe that God has abandoned us first, has abandoned us to our sin, has abandoned us to pain, abandoned us to death, then why not give in to these temptations? In self-sufficiency, fame, and power, we find three opportunities to repeat the mistake of the

garden. Three opportunities to put our trust in ourselves and the world instead of God. Three opportunities to once again lean away from God.

Jesus instead offers us three opportunities to lean towards God, towards love, towards trust. He invites us to feast on Scripture, to be sustained by the truth of God's word. He invites us to have confidence in God's saving hand, without needing to put God to the test. And he invites us to recognize God's sovereignty over the whole world, to look beyond the empires of this world and live into the Kingdom of Heaven. In the wilderness, Jesus offers us an alternative to fear of failure and submission to sin.

And so we find in Scripture the story of a God who would not and will not abandon his creation, his children, to the hell of their own creation, the separation of their own choosing. Read through the lens of Jesus Christ, we can see how all of scripture, all of God's Word, is a story of salvation, of redemption, of reconciliation, of new life, culminating in the person of Jesus, his passion, and resurrection. God is constantly leaning into a relationship with his children who time after time lean away. Everything we do as Christians is grounded in that Gospel truth. Our worship, our liturgy, our prayer, even our Lenten practices, are all rooted in the reality of God's love and his undying desire for relationship with us. We lean into a relationship with God and neighbor because God first leans into us.

So, why not eat the Oreo? Why resist that temptation? What's the point of Lent, anyways? We walk through the wilderness of Lent, fasting and praying and giving alms, because we trust in the God that has sought us and saved us. In Lent, we recognize that we cannot live apart from God and must lean into his love and strength if we are to live at all. Ultimately, Lent is not about the Oreo but the prayer I pray when I need Christ's help to keep my promise. It's about those small moments with God that I would miss otherwise. As Christians, we all desire a deeper relationship with Christ. We want our lives to reflect the reality of God's love. Lent is another opportunity to do just that, to get rid of those parts of our lives that draw us away from God and to take up new spiritual disciplines that orient us towards God's abiding love in preparation for the fulfilment of all our hopes at Easter. May these coming days and weeks be filled with opportunities for God's love to interrupt your life, opportunities for you to put your trust in God alone, to resist the temptations of the deceiver, and to let your life be a witness to the One who saves us from our weakness and empowers us to live into the dream of God, healed and whole, united to neighbor, united to Christ. That's why I won't eat the Oreo!