

The Fourth Temptation of Christ

Pete Scazzero

Malcolm Muggeridge, a BBC commentator and author for over thirty years, argued at the advent of television that if Jesus was alive today, there may have been a fourth temptation that went something like this:

One day a Roman tycoon named Lucius Gradus hears Jesus preaching in Galilee and is very impressed. “This Jesus has star potential. He could be a superstar!”

He tells his representatives to “puff Jesus” then bring him to Rome. He tells them to bring the John the Baptist guy with him, along with some talk show teachers from the Athens philosophy school.

Lucius Gradus ‘I’ll put him on the map, launch him off to a tremendous career as a worldwide evangelist. I’ll spread his teaching throughout the civilized world and beyond. He’d be crazy to turn it down! Instead of a ragtag lot following him from Galilee, everyone will know him”

There will be no commercials, just one highly respected public relations sponsor – Lucifer Inc. No more than: “This program comes to you courtesy of Lucifer Inc. at beginning and end with credits.”

Jesus, of course, says “No,” and is dismissed by all as irrelevant and “crazy.” His choice leads Him to a crucifixion and a slow unfolding of his message. It would take three hundred years to become known in the Roman Empire.

I am challenged as I reflect on this story, both personally and for us as a church.

What will it mean for us, truly, to put aside our wills in order to do His will, to be a community that serves others aware of the unimportance of status, achievement or prosperity, to allow our love for Christ to be purified, to “be shattered and compelled by Christ’s beauty,” and to make ourselves “accessible to the violent, reshaping love of God?”

It has been said that genuine Christians have always been an absurdity, acrobats and juggler from the world’s point of view, standing on their heads. Jesus’ ways and means are that different from the world.

I am excited about how God is using people from New Life to impact the world. From Isaac Chung’s movie about Rwanda, using art to impact a nation with hope, to Ed Tom’s founding of a charter public high school in the South Bronx, giving kids hope and a future, to a NLF mom who risked bringing a man with lung cancer to a prayer meeting where he is dramatically healed, God is clearly working.

My great concern for us is that our roots go deep into Christ, that we reject the “Christianity lite” so pervasive in the Western church. Towards this end we will be introducing our New Life *Rule of Life* this September.

The purpose of this *Rule* is to unite us as a local church, keeping us faithful to our unique grace and calling. This *Rule* is meant to serve as an anchor, a kind of banister to support us as we move forward in our journey with and for God. I believe it expresses the kind of people we seek to be for Christ in New York City in the 21st century.

And may our life together be a gift to the world for our Lord Jesus.