

**Galileo** has been called the father of astronomy, the father of modern physics, and even the father of science. Much of what we learn today in our basic science classes comes from his observations. He advanced the use of telescopes and was able to confirm the phases of Venus and the four largest moons around Jupiter.

But Galileo's championing of a belief by Copernicus is what proved to be the most controversial. During his lifetime, a large majority of philosophers and astronomers still subscribed (at least outwardly) to the [geocentric](#) view that the Earth was at the centre of the universe. After 1610, when Galileo began publicly supporting the [heliocentric](#) view, which placed the Sun at the center of the universe, he met with bitter opposition from some philosophers and church leaders.

This was difficult for Galileo because he was a practicing Catholic devoted to his religious faith. He used Scripture to defend his belief but it was to no avail. Two clerics eventually denounced him to the [Roman Inquisition](#) early in 1615. Although he was cleared of any offence at that time, the [Catholic Church](#) nevertheless condemned heliocentrism as "false and contrary to Scripture" in February 1616, and Galileo was warned to abandon his support for it—which he promised to do.

When Galileo later defended his views in 1632, he was found to be a heretic, forced to recant, and spent the rest of his life under house arrest. Galileo challenged the belief that we were the center of the universe. But most folks did not want to believe him. They wanted to keep to the belief that we human beings were the center of the universe.

Today we have read a passage from the gospel from Luke in which Jesus is challenged and tempted by the devil for 40 days. In this text, Jesus is led out into the desert where he does not eat for these 40 days. At the end of this time of fasting, not surprisingly, Jesus is famished. While he is at this time of vulnerability, Jesus is met by the devil who says to him, "If you are the son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

Facing this temptation, Jesus responds, “It is written that one does not live by bread alone.” Next the devil leads him up and shows him all of the kingdoms of the world. “You can have it all,” Jesus is told, “if you will only worship me.” But Jesus responds, “worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”

Then Jesus is taken up to Jerusalem and placed in the pinnacle of the temple and told to throw himself down and the angels will protect you. But Jesus says, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

But as we look at these temptations, they each can be boiled down to something very simple. In each temptation, Jesus is challenged to make himself the center. To make himself the focal point of everything. To make himself the center of the universe. But each time, Jesus says, “I am not the center of the universe. My perceived human needs are not the focus here. Instead, the focus is to be upon God. God is to be the center of everything.”

On Friday of this week, we had a very public profession of sin made by one of the most famous people of earth. Tiger Woods appeared in front of the world and admitted to cheating on his wife and letting down his friends, fans, and his family. According to Woods, “I stopped living by the core values that I was taught to believe in. I knew my actions were wrong, but I convinced myself that normal rules didn't apply.

I never thought about who I was hurting. Instead, I thought only about myself. I ran straight through the boundaries that a married couple should live by. I thought I could get away with whatever I wanted to. I felt that I had worked hard my entire life and deserved to enjoy all the temptations around me.

I felt I was entitled, “ Woods said. “Thanks to money and fame, I didn't have to go far to find them. I was wrong. I was foolish. I don't get to play by different rules. The same boundaries that apply to everyone apply to me.”

Even though Woods was raised a Buddhist, his words show someone who clearly understands that he had fallen to the temptation that was presented to Jesus in the desert. Woods admitted that he had come to believe that he was the center of the universe. That the world revolved around him. That he was above everyone else. And only when his world came crashing down did he come to the point of realizing that he was not the center of the universe.

How about you and me? Have we been feeling like we are the center of the universe or that we should be the center of the universe? Now I have tried to convince my family that I should be the center of their universe. I have tried to convince my children that it should all be about me and my needs. I have tried to convince my wife of that. And I try to convince the Session of this church that it should all be about me. But for some reason, they all seem to understand this passage of Scripture that life is not about satisfying me and my needs.

How many times do we feel that we have been shortchanged by something in life? How many times have you and I moaned about not getting something that we think we deserve? How many times have you and I become angry at someone else because we feel as though someone else got more of something than we got. That person over there got more attention. That person over there got more resources. That person over there got a better family life. That person over there got more ice cream in their bowl than I did. That person over there has a better vocation or more education or this or that.

And so because we feel like we are being shortchanged in some way, we then justify falling prey to whatever temptation is before us. For Tiger Woods, he felt he was entitled to cheat on his wife. For others of us, we may be giving into other temptations that we justify by saying, "I can have this because I am not getting that." As a result of feeling this sense of entitlement, our society has become a nation of cry babies. We whine until we get what we want. Wah, wah, wah.

But this text reminds us that the focus is not our needs and our wishes. It's not about us. We are not the center of the universe. We are not the center of our family. We are not the center of the church. We are not the center of anything. Instead, according to this text, a balanced life always remembers that God is at the center of everything. God is to be the center of our life. Our family. Our church.

This past Wednesday was Ash Wednesday. And those of us fortunate to be in worship on Ash Wednesday were able to have ashes put on our heads which reminded us that we are made from the dust and to the dust we return. We are not the creator. God is the Creator.

And the way to remind ourselves to keep life in perspective is to keep our vision upon helping other people achieve what they need in life, sometimes at our own peril.

Dr. Joe Greer, a doctor in Miami, tells about a time that he was seeing some patients around lunchtime when a mother and her children, who had been staying at a Salvation Army shelter, came into the clinic where he worked.

"Her youngest son who appeared to be about 6 years old had a sweet smile. Dr. Greer handed him his sandwich."

The kid took the sandwich out of the bag, unwrapped it, broke it in half, took a couple of bites and then stuck it back in the wrapper. The Dr. could not figure out why this kid who was living in a homeless shelter was doing that.

"And so the doctor asked the kid, 'Why'd you do that?' " Why did you only take two bites of that sandwich and put it back in your bag?

The 6 year old little boy looked up at Greer and said, "The rest is for my brother."

As Dr. Greer recalls, "that was probably one of the most important lessons I ever learned." "This 6-year-old homeless child is teaching us what we're all supposed to do: think about somebody else." AMEN.

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-“Doctor learns a lesson in care from 6 year old, NPR storycorp segment on 2/19/10 and found at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=123863299>

-Text: Luke 4: 1-13

-Given: February 21, 2010 in Allison Creek Presbyterian Church (York, SC)