"No."

What an important word for those of us who are used to getting our way. Jesus understood the power of that word. He was a master of self-denial and actually said that anyone who would follow him must also learn to master saying no to themselves. Jesus once fasted for 40 days and nights, and at every turn he marshaled the strength of God in the word no. He said no to food, even though he was hungry and resisted the tempter with the words, “man does not live on bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” After that temptation he had to say no to others things too. Maybe we struggle with sin because we are not practiced at saying no. Maybe we do not grow or move forward spiritually sometimes for the same reason. What we say no to is as important to who we are and who we will become as what we say yes to, maybe more. As you move from the end of the first day into the second, I am reminded of the kind of strength the spirit gives. It is the strength to say no to our whining bodies and in so doing to say yes to God and what he has for us. We have to be able to master these first couple of days of the fast, simply pushing back the appetite so that we can move on to greater things. Don’t be discouraged if at first you have trouble praying. You are doing an important work in these first couple of days, just saying no. Greater challenges lay ahead and if we cannot bring our flesh into submission to Jesus we will never get there. Take heart everyone, and stick with it.