



RISING FROM THE ASHES

40 DAY LENTEN
DEVOTIONAL

2023

ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL

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From the Vicar

On the Christian calendar, Lent (from Latin, meaning “40th”) is the 40 days beginning on Ash Wednesday and leading up to Easter Sunday (Sundays aren’t counted, because they are days of renewal and celebration). Lent is a time of contemplation, a time of dedication, and a time of preparation. The practice of daily devotions stems from Lent’s emphasis on deepening our faith through our study of God’s Word, reflection, and prayer. This is an opportunity for us to follow Jesus to the cross, that we may fully understand and appreciate Jesus’ sacrificial death on Good Friday and His triumph over sin and death on Easter Sunday.

The pastoral team, staff, and ministry leaders from St Andrew’s Cathedral have contributed to this 40-day Lenten devotional “Rising from the Ashes”. On Sundays, we have included a page for you to write down and reflect upon the sermon that is preached.

Our hope and prayer in compiling and sharing these Lenten devotions, is that they might encourage and deepen your faith as we embark on our corporate journey to become disciples who are **Passionately Committed to Christ** (SAC’s theme for 2023-25). Please set aside time each day to read the scripture text and the written devotion. There are 2 questions at the end of each devotion for your personal reflection. Take time to reflect and journal your reflection to track what God is saying to you in this season of Lent. May you be deeply enriched as his beloved disciple!

Revd Canon Dr Lewis Lew
Vicar

WHAT IS LENT?

The highlight of the Christian year is Easter, the day when our Lord rose from the dead. Lent is a 40-day (not counting Sundays) season of preparation for Easter. The season begins on Ash Wednesday, climaxing during Holy Week with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and concluding on the Vigil of Easter.

Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the 6 Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent, and are referred to as the Sundays in Lent. The number 40 relates to many biblical events, but especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling.

Christians today use this time for introspection, self-examination and repentance as a way to focus on the need for God's grace. It is really a preparation to celebrate God's marvellous redemption at Easter and the resurrected life that we live and hope for, as Christians. This season of the year is equal only to the Season of Advent in importance in the Christian year.


Traditionally, the focus of Lent was always threefold:

- It was a time to prepare new converts for baptism through intensive classes and instruction.
- It was a time for long-standing Christians to review their lives and renew their commitment to Jesus Christ.
- It was a time for backsliders to be restored to the faith.

It is customary to mark the season of Lent by giving up some things and taking on others. Both can serve to mark the season as a holy time of preparation. For example, fasting and abstention from certain activities and social media are some things we can give up. In most cases, giving up something can be more meaningful by using the time and money saved for other purposes such as prayer, works of service and charitable giving. Some other spiritual disciplines which can be inculcated during Lent include silence, solitude, chastity, frugality, bible study, and confession.

May this Lenten season be a special one as we seek God afresh and passionately renew our commitment as His disciples.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LENT

 n Ash Wednesday, as Lent begins, we are invited “to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbour” by exercising the Discipline of Lent: repentance, fasting, prayer and works of love. These become the specific occasions and opportunities for spiritual renewal during this season of renewal.

Living out a discipline takes our Lord’s words about self-denial seriously (Matthew 16:24). Through discipline, we find freedom and grace, just as parental discipline is loving and brings a child to freedom and righteousness (Hebrews 12:3-13).

In the Lenten discipline, we focus our lives on Christ’s self-sacrificing passion, death and resurrection, which has brought us acceptance, forgiveness and redemption by God. Through that same discipline, we make a loving response to God.

REPENTANCE

Repentance means turning 180 degrees away from sin to walk towards God. Repentance includes an examination of our lives and our actions in light of God’s grace and love, which comes to us free and undeserved through Christ’s death and resurrection.

The Apostle Paul tells us that we have been joined to Christ’s death and resurrection through our dying to sin and rising to new life in Baptism (Romans 6:3-4). Repentance therefore also means returning to our Baptism, that occasion when we were washed of sin, joined to God in Christ and received the Holy Spirit.

Here are some ways in which we can make that return to our Baptism through repentance:

1. Attend the Ash Wednesday service to begin your Lent with this major act of corporate confession and receive the ashes as a sign of repentance and renewal.
2. Read, reflect and renew your Baptism vows and seek God’s grace in areas which you have come short.
3. Attend worship each Sunday when corporate confession is made.

4. During your daily prayers, examine your life in light of the Ten Commandments and ask God to forgive you and to lead you into ways of loving him and your neighbour more deeply.
5. Make your private confessions before God during your daily devotion.
6. If there is conflict or tension between you and someone else in your life, seek to resolve it so that it does not become a stumbling block to your faith and spiritual growth.

PRAYER

Prayer may generally be described as that activity in which we are drawn closer to God in contemplation and communication. Prayer is our half of a conversation with God. That means that prayer is not only speaking, but listening as well.

Prayer finds its anchor and focus in the Sunday Holy Communion with the community of faith - that holy meal in which we communion with God through the Body and Blood of Christ. All prayers during the week spring forth from that union on Sunday and eagerly anticipate our next Communion.

It helps to have a consistent time and a quiet place for prayer, although prayer can happen anytime and anywhere. A cross or crucifix and a lighted candle can help create your place for prayer. For devotional aids or spiritual direction during the season of Lent, make an appointment with the pastor.

Daily prayer might include these things:

1. Use this Lent daily devotional book as a guide for prayer and meditation.
2. The Psalms are a wonderful treasure for prayer.
3. Read scripture each day, perhaps the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) or a portion of the Passion Narrative (Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-23, John 18-19).

Or take a book of the Bible, divide the number of chapters by the 40 days of Lent and read those portions each day.

4. The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creeds are good for meditation and prayer.

5. Examine yourself in light of your reading and meditation, and ask God to lead you into repentance and renewal in faith.
6. Close your prayer time with a favourite prayer, the Lord's Prayer, or the following prayer: "Heavenly Father, thank you for this day and for this time of prayer. Through the discipline of Lent, help me to grow in my love for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"

FASTING & ABSTINENCE

Fasting comes to us from Judaism and was recommended by Jesus both in example and teaching (Luke 4:2, Matthew 6:16-18, Mark 2:20). It is a practice that is designed to strengthen the spiritual life by weakening one's attractions to pleasures of the senses. Thus fasting is always coupled with prayer and spiritual preparation.

Since ancient times, the entire season of Lent has been marked by fasting and abstinence. Fridays in particular have been a special day of fasting because of it being the day of Christ's death.

Fasting does not necessarily mean giving up all food for a day. More frequently it is the giving up or limiting of a particular food or food group (sweets, desserts, chocolate, butter, fat, eggs, etc.).

Water is never given up in a fast. In addition, children under 16, people over 65, those who are ill or on medication, pregnant women, and travellers have traditionally been excused from fasting.

Abstinence from some activity (such as television, movies, entertainment, gaming, social-media, etc.) on certain days, at certain hours or throughout the season is another way to observe the Lenten fast. This is designed to give more time for prayer and spiritual work.

Many of the following suggestions for fasting have been practised by Christians for centuries:

1. Fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday with only one simple meal during the day, usually without meat. Eliminate a food or food group for the entire season. Especially consider saving rich and fatty foods for Easter.
2. Choose to fast a meal during the week throughout Lent to focus on prayer e.g., every Tuesday lunch.

3. Abstain from or limit a favourite activity (television, gaming, etc.) for the entire season, and spend more time in prayer, Bible study, and reading devotional material.
4. Do not just give up something that you have to give up for your doctor or diet anyway. Make your fast a voluntary self-denial (i.e. discipline) that you offer to God in prayer.

WORKS OF LOVE

The intention of this part of the Lenten Discipline is to connect our faith in God's love for us with actions that depict the love for others in the world.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). Love is why Jesus came. Love is why Jesus died. Love is why God raised him from the dead. Love is the whole purpose and mission of the Church and of every Christian member: to show God's love in the world.

Consider one or more of these suggestions for this portion of your Lenten Discipline:

1. Use Matthew 25:31-40 and Luke 4:18-19 as guides for choosing to do a work of love.
2. Go out of your way to do something nice for somebody at least once a week during Lent.
3. Make a donation for the needy through your church.
4. Volunteer a portion of your time with a local organisation that serves the poor, aged and needy.
5. Ask the church pastor for suggestions of a needy place or person that could use your time, talent or treasure.
6. Contact a hospital, nursing home or prison about making visits. Especially, to see those who otherwise receive no visitors.
7. Visit homebound members of the church. Perhaps make something and take it as a gift (check on diet restrictions).
8. When doing your work of love, meditate upon Christ's words, "As you do it for the least of these, you do it for me" (Matthew 25:40).

BEGINNING & KEEPING YOUR DISCIPLINE

As with all things, begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit for guidance in choosing those things that would best fit you for your Lenten Discipline. Prayerfully dedicate all your choices to God as a commitment for the six weeks of Lent, and ask that your Lenten Discipline move you closer to God for the sake of the sufferings and death of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

After making your choices and beginning your discipline, it is not necessary to share your choices or your acts of love with anyone else. In fact, anonymity is regarded as better (Matthew 6:1-7, 16-18).

Don't be too hard on yourself, too rigorous, or too legalistic. The idea is to have a discipline that moves you spiritually closer to God, not one that focuses you solely on your discipline.

If you break your discipline, you certainly will not be condemned eternally. However, breaking promises to God is not something to take lightly. So if you break your discipline, simply repent quietly and start over. Remember that Peter denied Jesus and all the others abandoned him. Yet all repented and were welcomed by Jesus after the resurrection.

A Lenten Discipline Worksheet

A. For **Repentance**, I will:

B. For **Prayer**, I will:

C. For **Fasting**, I will:

D. For **Works of Love**, I will:

SPECIAL DAYS AND SERVICES

ASH WEDNESDAY

The first day of Lent is marked with a special liturgy. The theme for the day, though not for all of Lent, is that we stand as sinners condemned to die, but for God's grace. This is symbolised by the imposition of ashes on the forehead, with the words, *"You are dust and to dust you shall return."* In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of penitence and mourning. Ash Wednesday is one of two days of special observance (the other being Good Friday) for which fasting is recommended.

PALM SUNDAY

This Sunday before Easter is the last Sunday in Lent. With the entrance of palm branches at worship, we experience the joyous demonstration of loyalty to Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. We remember the crowds waving branches and throwing down their cloaks as Jesus rides the colt. But that loyalty of the followers is tested as we journey through Holy Week.

HOLY MONDAY, HOLY TUESDAY AND HOLY WEDNESDAY

The days between Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday are known as Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday. Over these three days, we continue to journey with Jesus on His final week in Jerusalem. During which we commemorate certain important events, including His increasing confrontation with the religious leaders and the prediction of His own impending death.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

This is the Thursday in Holy Week and is marked with a service of Tenebrae ("shadows") or service of darkness. The altar is bare and draped with a black cloth. After each scripture reading, a candle is removed from the altar and the lights dimmed. After the last candle is carried out, the people leave in darkness, silence and sorrow. The light of the world is gone. The purpose of the service is to recreate the betrayal, abandonment and agony of the events; and it is left unfinished, because the story isn't over until Easter.

GOOD FRIDAY

The Friday in Holy Week is a time for remembering Jesus' death. Why is the day that we commemorate Jesus' death on a cross, called "good"? One reason is that in old English, "good" is derived from God. Just as "good-bye" is derived from "God be with ye." So it is God's Friday. Another reason that this Friday is called good is because it erased all our sins. Good Friday brings us our salvation and atonement, our "at-one-ment," with God. Without Good Friday, there would not be Easter. There is no triumph without suffering, no crown without a cross. This is the second day of special observance for which fasting is recommended.

THE EASTER VIGIL

Traditionally, an Easter Vigil service takes place either after sunset on Holy Saturday or on the sunrise of Easter morning.

This was also the traditional time of baptism in the early centuries of Christianity. This service begins in darkness and a new fire is lit, from which the Christ candle is lighted. It signifies the light of Christ coming into the world anew at the resurrection. This service ends the season of Lent and begins the joy of the Easter season.

THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR

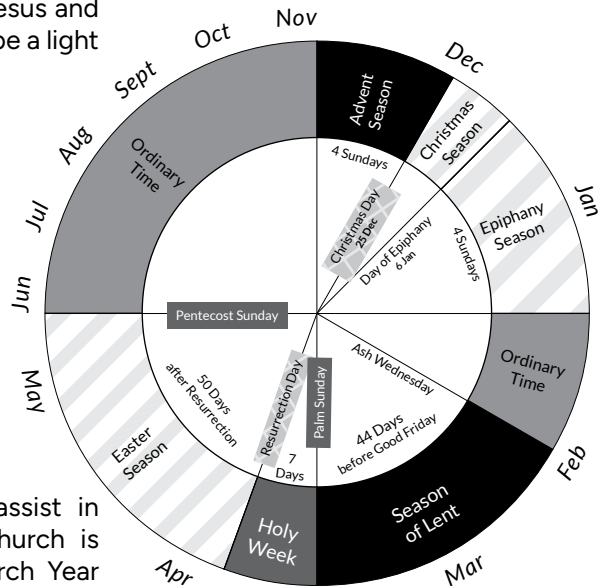
We keep track of time and seasons of the year by using calendars that provide us opportunities to observe, commemorate, and celebrate certain events or occasions. Likewise, the purpose of the Christian Calendar is set to celebrate and better understand the entire mystery of Christ, from His incarnation and birth until His Ascension, the day of Pentecost and the expectation of His return in glory. During the course of the year, the paschal mystery – the passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus – is viewed from different angles, in different lights.



While Jewish celebration revolves around the Exodus from Egypt, the Christian Church year focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus. The sequence of festivals from Advent to Resurrection Sunday becomes an annual spiritual journey for worshippers as they kneel at the manger, listen on a hillside, walk the streets of Jerusalem, hear the roar of the mob, stand beneath the cross, and witness the resurrection! The rest of the church year provides opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the coming of Jesus and his commission to his people to be a light to the world.

PRINCIPAL DATES (2022-23)

Advent	27 Nov 22
Christmas	25 Dec 22
Epiphany	06 Jan 23
Ash Wednesday	22 Feb 23
Palm Sunday	02 Apr 23
Good Friday	07 Apr 23
Easter Day	09 Apr 23
Ascension Day	18 May 23
Pentecost	28 May 23
Trinity Sunday	04 Jun 23



One simple avenue that can assist in tracking the seasons of the church is the use of Colours of the Church Year in the sanctuary. Different colours are associated with different seasons, and the changing colours of communion table and pulpit coverings, or wall banners, provide visual clues for the seasons.

White	Green
Purple	Gold
Red	

ADVENT

The Christian Year begins with the Advent season which starts four Sundays before December 25 and ends on Christmas Eve. There are two themes to this season, both reflected by the term "advent" which means "coming." First, this season is a period to prepare for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas), as we recall the first time that Christ came to us. Second, it is a time to reflect and prepare for Christ's Second Coming at the end of time.



In Advent, we wait expectantly to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child and the full coming of God's Kingdom of peace.

Isaiah 64:1-2b

During this season, we remember the long years of waiting by the people of Israel for the Messiah, the messages of hope in the prophets and how Mary and Joseph were faithful to God's plan. Although historically observed penitentially as a "fast", modern lectionary points more towards eschatological themes, thus making Advent a time of hope and expectation.

The colour of Advent is Purple which is symbolic of penitence and fasting as well as royalty - to welcome the Advent of the King. Purple is also the colour of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion.

CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY

Christmas is our celebration of the birth of Jesus, the promised Messiah while Epiphany celebrates the early manifestation of Jesus, from his birth to the beginning of his public ministry.



The season of Epiphany recalls the events that manifest the divinity of Jesus and we are called to respond to Christ in faith. The gospel readings begin with the Visit of the Magi on the day of Epiphany and the following Sundays celebrate events such as the Baptism of Jesus, the Wedding at Cana and the Calling of the Disciples.

Christmas is the great celebration of the gift of Jesus to the world.

Isaiah 52:7

The liturgical colour of the season of Christmas is White, symbolizing purity and joy.

ORDINARY TIME (AFTER EPIPHANY)

Ordinary Time is the longest season of the Christian year and it comprises two periods in the year: first after the Epiphany until the day before Ash Wednesday, and the second, that from after Pentecost until the day before the First Sunday of Advent.



During both periods of Ordinary Time, the emphasis is on the teachings of Christ and His commission to His disciples. The Church is therefore asked to grow in faith and to explore her mission in the world.

During Ordinary Time we study God's Word and grow our faith.

Luke 2:46-47

The traditional liturgical colour for both seasons, Green, is the colour of growth.

LENT

The traditions of Lent are derived from the season's origin as a time when the Church prepared candidates, or "catechumens," for their baptism into the Body of Christ. It eventually became a season of preparation not only for catechumens but also for the whole congregation. Self-examination, study, fasting, prayer and works of love are disciplines historically associated with Lent. Conversion—literally, the "turning around" or reorientation of our lives towards God—is the theme of Lent. Both as individuals and as a community, we look inward and reflect on our readiness to follow Jesus in his journey towards the cross. The forty days of Lent correspond to the forty-day temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and the forty-year journey of Israel from slavery to a new community.



Lent is a 40-day season of reflection and preparation for Holy Week and Easter.

Mark 8:34b

On Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on the foreheads of the congregation as a symbol that we have come from dust and one day will return to dust. With this sobering reminder of life's fragility, we begin a spiritual quest that continues until the Easter Vigil, when new members of the church are often baptised and the entire congregation joins in a reaffirmation of baptismal vows.

Most of this time of preparation is symbolised by the penitential colour of Purple, though the season is bracketed by the mourning Black of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

HOLY WEEK

During Holy Week, the Church follows the footsteps of Jesus from his entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) through the Last Supper (Maundy Thursday) to his death on the Cross (Good Friday).

Red, the colour of blood and therefore of martyrs, is the traditional colour for Palm Sunday and the next three days of Holy Week.

On Maundy Thursday, White or Gold symbolizes the church's rejoicing in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But at the end of the Maundy Thursday celebration, the mood changes abruptly: all decorations are removed and the Holy Table is stripped bare. The Church becomes as empty as a tomb. On Good Friday, either Black or Red is customary.



We enter our highest holy time retelling the final week of Jesus' life: his betrayal, arrest, trial, humiliation and crucifixion.

Mark 15:34, 37

EASTER AND PENTECOST

Instead of finding a sealed tomb, the women who had come at dawn on Sunday are surprised by an angel who announces astonishing news: "Jesus has been raised from the dead" (Matthew 28:7). The heavenly messenger invites the mourners to see the empty tomb and then go and tell the disciples that the Crucified One is alive! The season from Easter to Pentecost is also called the Great Fifty Days, a tradition inspired by the Jewish season of fifty days between Passover and Shavuot—the feast celebrating the giving of the Torah to Moses.

The liturgical colour for this season is celebratory White or Gold. When the season ends on Pentecost Sunday, White is replaced with Red. This colour reminds the congregation of fire—the symbol of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit overpowered the barriers of culture and race. The first Sunday after Pentecost celebrates the Trinity, and the colour again is White or Gold.



Our high holy time culminates in Easter, a 50-day celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 4:32-33

ORDINARY TIME (AFTER PENTECOST)

This longest season of the Church year is a continuation of the "Time of the Church" that began on the Sunday after Epiphany. It explores the mission of the church and uses the colour of Green, symbolising growth.



We follow Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:18-20

How to use the Lent Daily Devotional?

1. Begin with prayer and worship.
2. Confess our sins.
3. Read the bible passages of the day.
4. Reflect on the passage read:
 - How have I learnt from the passages?
 - What is God telling me to do?
5. Read the written devotional
6. Answer the questions asked.
7. Write down your thoughts.
8. End in prayer and thanksgiving to God.
9. Go and obey what God has asked you to do in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For His Eyes Only

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

DAY 1
22 Feb, Wed

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 58:1-12, Psalm 51:1-18

Rev'd Christopher Chan
Associate Vicar

The Greek word *hypocrites* means 'actor', one who interprets from underneath a mask. A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be someone he is not. The hypocrites described in Matthew 6 put up a show of virtue for others to see, and Jesus denounces such behaviour. If we practise our righteousness before others to gain their admiration and praise, even our good works will become displeasing to God.

Jesus applies this principle to three aspects of piety: giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting. He is not saying that our religious acts should never be done in public. After all, in the previous chapter of the gospel of Matthew, he exhorts us to 'let [our] light shine before others, so that they may see [our] good works and give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 5:16). Public piety is valuable when our intent is to bring glory to God. Jesus is addressing the issue of motive: what are we really seeking through our actions – to glorify God or ourselves?

The call for us to lay up treasures in heaven is often applied to material possessions, but its context suggests that it should also apply to earthly praise. The praise of man might seem more tangible and immediate, but God's praise is far more precious! Earthly rewards are temporary; heavenly rewards are eternal.

During this season of Lent, many of us will, rightly, be more intentional in our practice of spiritual disciplines. Let us do this for God's eyes only, seeking his praise and not the praise of man.

REFLECTION

- *In what ways have you sought attention for your religious practices and good works?*
- *What does this reveal about your estimation of the value of earthly rewards?*

Take Up Your Cross Daily

Luke 9:22-25

DAY 2
23 Feb, Thurs

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Psalm 1

A/Prof Joseph Thambiah
People's Warden, PCC

This passage of Scripture is about life and death. Jesus foretells what is going to happen to Him in stark language – He will undergo intense physical and mental suffering, be rejected, be subject to a brutal execution but be resurrected on the third day.

Jesus' sobering but unambiguous message to His disciples was that following Him would not be easy. It would require them to take up their crosses and follow in His footsteps. There would be dangers and threats and the listening disciples must have been shaken and bewildered. They had been enthusiastic and eager followers but now, clearly, the danger was imminent, and the danger was real. Fear for themselves and their families and thoughts of abandoning their leader must surely have flown through their minds.

Taking up our cross daily has, somehow, now come to be interpreted as carrying our own burdens and troubles on our shoulders. We seem to have imported our own definition into the passage. But carrying our cross is not about us but about Jesus. Bear in mind that the cross was a brutal and reviled symbol of torture and execution. It was a symbol of death. Note that "come after" is translated from the Greek words "*erchomai opiso*" meaning to be an adherent – literally to cling onto. The clear reading of the passage is, therefore, that we are to die to ourselves daily. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer once put it, "*when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die*". We are called to crucify our ego, our selfishness and our self-centeredness, deny our lusts and passions and cling onto Jesus as we walk with Him and follow in His footsteps.

The gospel is unambiguous - suffering and self-denial are the hallmarks of a disciple. It is easy to engage in "Comfortable Christianity" – to be seen doing the right things and saying the right words and "gaining the whole world" but what Jesus is calling us to is a costly "Radical Discipleship". It means denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily and following Him through Whom we gain salvation and eternal life.

REFLECTION

- How might you live out the true meaning of the phrase "taking up your cross daily and following Him?"
- What does it mean for you to follow in Jesus' footsteps?

A Question About Fasting

Matthew 9:14-15

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 58:1-9a, Psalm 51:1-5, 17-18

Ds Ti Lian Swan
 Deaconess

In Judaism, the Day of Atonement is the only public fast day prescribed by the Law (Leviticus 16:29-31). However, in OT times, Jews observed public and private fasts (usually accompanied with prayer) to signify mourning (1 Samuel 31:13), to show repentance and remorse (2 Samuel 12:15-23) or to bring a serious matter before God (2 Chronicles 20:1-4). Fasting without genuine repentance and righteous acts was denounced as an empty religious ritual by the prophets (Isaiah 58).

In Jesus' time, the Pharisees and their disciples fasted as often as twice a week (Luke 18:12). John's disciples probably followed this custom. Jesus denounced hypocritical fasting - fasting that was done as an ostentatious display of one's piety. On the contrary, fasting should be directed towards God and not towards men (Matthew 6:16-18).

Jesus' answer to the question John's disciples asked in Matthew 9:14-15, highlights the reason for fasting. Using the analogy of a bridegroom (John the Baptist had referred to Jesus as a bridegroom in John 3:29), Jesus said it would not be appropriate for the bridegroom's guests (His disciples) to fast and mourn during the joyous occasion of his wedding. So Jesus' disciples have no reason to fast but to rejoice when He is with them.

There will however come a time when Jesus would be forcibly taken away from them. His absence will cause them much sorrow and then they will have a reason to fast.

In the season of Lent, may we develop a greater spiritual hunger for intimacy with Jesus in our times of fasting.

REFLECTION

- *Why and how will you fast in this season of Lent?*
- *What do you desire in your time of fasting?*

Have You Done Your Spiritual Scan Recently?

Luke 5:27-32

DAY 4
25 Feb, Sat

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 58:9b-14, Psalm 86:1-7

Pamela Yoong
Cell Groups Cluster Leader

Just prior to this passage of Jesus reaching out to Levi, the tax collector – one who was clearly despised and shunned, there was the record of Jesus cleansing a leper and another record of Jesus healing the paralytic. When he was questioned about his actions, Jesus' reply was, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Recently, I was at the polyclinic for my biannual checkup. As I am of a certain age, the nurse attending to me asked me about doing the recommended scans for my age group – scans I know I should have done but I had them delayed due to COVID. Perfect excuse, in my opinion. After all, I belong to a generation which believes "if it ain't broke, why fix it?".

The truth is each of the earlier three examples (leper, paralytic, tax collector or outcast) were individuals who clearly needed help because their ailments or issues were obvious physically. But there were and still are many whose ailments are not obvious to the naked eye. And they would include folks like me who may look physically well on the outside until a scan shows otherwise.

What we all really need, and with no exception, is a thorough spiritual scan and Jesus' healing touch. And like all the other medical scans we do, spiritual scans should be done regularly, and for that matter, daily. So my friends, are we ready for and open to His scan and His touch?

REFLECTION

- *Jesus is our great physician, do you feel that you are someone who is sick and in need of his healing?*
- *Have you done a "heart scan" recently? Invite Jesus to do that for you today.*

Sunday Sermon

Overcoming Temptation

Matthew 4:1-11

26 FEB

1st Sunday of Lent



Something that “shines” from the passage or sermon - whatever impacts you most, or draws your attention.



Anything that is difficult to understand, or a question you would like to ask the writer of the passage or God.



A personal application for your life.



Name someone whom you can share and benefit from what you have learned.

Faith In Action

Matthew 25:31-46

DAY 5
27 Feb, Mon

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18, Psalm 19:7-14

Rev'd Daniel Lim
Priest

NATO - This term came to mind as I read today's passage. I am not referring to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but to the acronym for "No Action Talk Only". In Matthew 25:31-46, this acronym fits the group that is likened to goats. Even though they acknowledged Jesus as Lord and claimed to have ministered to the Lord (v. 44), Jesus revealed that their devotion was NATO because they have not put into practice that important commandment which God has given i.e. love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:39). How could their devotion to God be genuine if they have no regard for those who are in need and who matter so much to God? 1 John 4:21 makes it very clear, "...whoever loves God must also love his brother."

This is the same reason why the sheep in today's passage are commended by Jesus. Their acts of love towards the needy were acknowledged by Jesus as an act of love towards Him. The outcome of such genuine devotion is the inheritance of the kingdom of God, whereas the outcome of a NATO devotion from the goats is mentioned in verse 41, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." It is a harsh but fair consequence for why should anyone who does not have a genuine relationship with God have any right to inherit God's treasured possession.

During this Lent, may we seek to grow a genuine and deeper devotion to God by putting our faith into action and God's Word into practice, particularly in showing compassion to those who may be physically or spiritually hungry, thirsty, naked, sick or imprisoned. Our love for them would be a visible act of our love for God.

REFLECTION

- *What must you stop, start or continue doing in order to grow a genuine and deeper devotion to God?*
- *How can you give up your time, money, comfort etc. to help an individual or a group of people who may be in need?*

Our Father

Matthew 6:7-15

DAY 6
28 Feb, Tues

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 55:10-11, Psalm 34:4-6, 21-22

Joyce Ho
Pastoral Staff

We recite the Lord's Prayer every Sunday during Service. We have become so familiar with it that very often many of us recite it without thinking of its significance.

The Lord's Prayer is what Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray. It is a prayer when prayed with conviction, shows our dependence on God, on his provision and his power to change the attitudes of our hearts.

The prayer starts with "Our Father" and this shows a special relationship with the person we are having a conversation with. A heavenly Father who is always there, waiting to meet us at our point of need. When we pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done", we are declaring our desire to serve the Lord by doing His will. Asking God for "our daily bread" shows our trust and dependency on God to provide for every need in our lives.

We all know it is so hard to forgive when someone has hurt us badly. Jesus says that unless we forgive, we too will not be forgiven. We will always be carrying a burden and will also not be able to receive His grace and blessings. Facing temptations is a daily affair. We live in a broken world. So we need to put on the armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) daily to help us stand firm in the face of temptation and resist the schemes of the enemy.

Let's not heap empty phrases like the pagans, praying loudly in the public square. When we pray, may we dwell in His presence, meditating on each sentence, allowing the power and intimacy of our relationship with our Heavenly Father to transform us, becoming who God wants us to be. As you meditate on the Lord's Prayer, may you also experience the intimate love of your Heavenly Father.

REFLECTION

- *Think about your relationship with your earthly father. If you have any hard feelings towards him, ask God to help you forgive him. Pray for him. Our feelings about our earthly father can colour our feelings about God. Do not allow past hurts to prevent you from having a relationship with your heavenly Father.*
- *If you have a good relationship with your earthly father, thank God for this precious gift. Pray for him too.*

The Sign Of Jonah

Luke 11: 29-32

DAY 7
1 Mar, Wed

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jonah 3, Psalm 51:1-5, 17-18

David Ng
Pastoral Staff

The greatest of human arts cannot compete with the beauty of nature. Can an animal explore, learn, imagine, dream, and envision a future and make that vision a reality like what man can do? God stamped his image on humanity in a way he did not with any other creature.

The Jews of Jesus' day asked him for a sign to validate who he said he was (Luke 11:29). How stubborn could they have been? Jesus had surrounded them with signs through all the years of his ministry. He cast out demons, calmed storms, turned water into wine, healed the sick and even raised the dead. Still, they had the nerve to ask for another. Jesus responded that the only sign they would receive would be the sign of Jonah, which was a typological metaphor for His future crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

Jonah was an Israelite prophet sent to preach against the wicked city of Nineveh. Jonah did not want to go, but he finally did when compelled by God. The Ninevites repented and the city was saved.

People keep asking for a sign, but unless a person repents and believes in the crucified Christ, we like the people of Nineveh will stand before the judgement of God.

REFLECTION

- *People often ask for a sign to show them God exists. Looking around, do you see signs of God's existence?*
- *In spite of a world filled with the light of the majesty of God, we shut our eyes and remain in darkness. Jesus stands before you with arms wide open. Will you open your eyes to him?*

I Want

Matthew 7:7-12

DAY 8
2 Mar, Thurs

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 55:6-9, Psalm 138

Dr Reuben Wong
Server, PCC

"I want", these are two of the most often uttered words. Whether it be in the cry of a hungry toddler for food, the wailing of a child wanting a toy, or spoken authoritatively by grown-ups demanding action.

Sometimes the "want" is seemingly legitimate, such as that of a child wanting to be fed or a suffering patient pleading to be healed of the cancer ravaging his body. Other times, the "want" can border on being egocentric – "I want you to do what I say" or "I want a bigger salary and bonus".

The common underpinning is that the requestor genuinely believes the "want" is justified, and often feels entitled to it. So, when it is denied or unmet, there is always disappointment, sometimes anger and frustration.

But there are two important facets.

First, is the process of asking. If the child who is hungry does not speak, no one will know he is hungry and he goes unfed. In the same vein, Jesus exhorts us to ask, through prayers, supplications and petitions. Whilst it is often said that God should already know what we are thinking and it is unnecessary to ask, I believe that the "asking" process serves an important purpose – it forces us to take the effort to formulate our thoughts before articulating them, and in doing so, allows us to clearly think through the request and justify it.

Second, is the "want" really a "need"? Putting it simply, is it a desire or is it a necessity? Jesus clearly speaks to this point in Matthew 7, by painting the picture of an earthly father who provides what his children need. Our Lord then takes it to a higher level by proclaiming "How much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!", making it manifestly clear that God will provide our needs and wants, if in His infinite wisdom, deems that they are good for us.

REFLECTION

- *What are my "wants"? Are my "wants" really what I need?*
- *Do I trust my heavenly Father to provide what I need? And if I do not get what I want, do I have the peace to know my Father in heaven knows what is best for me?*

Time To Unmask

Matthew 5:20-26

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Ezekiel 18:21-28, Psalm 130

DAY 9
3 Mar, Fri

Ds June Tan
Deaconess

Lent is the time to unmask. Not the removal of the physical mask so needed during COVID. But our spiritual mask. During New Testament times, the scribes and Pharisees wore spiritual masks. This made them look religious, as they did the right things for men to see. But the masks hid their true selves – they were hypocrites. So, Jesus says that unless our righteousness is greater than theirs, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 20). We must not just look religious. We must unmask and be real on the inside.

Have we murdered anyone? We may say no but Jesus says that if we are even angry with a brother, insult him or curse him by calling him unkind names, we are guilty of murder and so are liable to go to hell (v. 22)! This sounds harsh but Jesus warns of the direct opposite – that while we hope for heaven (v. 20), this “secret murder” will instead lead us to hell. The Orthodox Jewish Bible translates verse 22 as speaking of Eish Gehinnom (fire of hell). The Valley of Hinnom was a real place in Bible times and exists until today. Originally a place where the Canaanites sacrificed their children to their gods, it was where people screamed in terror and agony. Later it became a rubbish dump with constant fires burning. So, this valley (just outside the Old City of Jerusalem) was a visible and scary warning of hell.

Unless we wish to go there, we must quickly make peace with our brother. Instead of doing the religious thing of presenting a gift to God (v. 23), we should first be reconciled with the brother. The phrase that you “remember that your brother has something against you” sounds like the blame lies with your brother. But no. Fights and quarrels are always two-way. He has something against you because you first offended him.

Quickly make peace before the quarrel goes to court, and we end up losing even our last penny (v. 26). Yet surely Jesus speaks of more than just money. In the light of what He has said in this passage, the danger is that we may lose our all – even heaven – unless we repent of the sin of murder and be reconciled to our brother.

Sober thoughts for the sober season of Lent. It is time to unmask and deal with the darkness and dirt in our hearts.

REFLECTION

- *Have you ever been angry, insulted or even cursed someone?*
- *What can I do to make peace with them? What good can I do for them?*



Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48

DAY 10
4 Mar, Sat

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Deuteronomy 26:16-19, Psalm 119:1-8

Daphne Gan
Cell Group Leader, PCC

In this passage, Jesus is responding to a misinterpretation of the commandment in Leviticus 19:18 "...you shall love your neighbour as yourself...". We know from the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 that "neighbour" does not refer only to our friends or loved ones but also those who have animosity towards us.

Our enemies are those who outrightly harm and hurt us, including those who go against our desires in less hostile ways. For example, a condescending boss, an uncaring family member or even the seemingly rude churchgoer who refuses to acknowledge your hellos every Sunday. While we might not outrightly call them our enemy, Jesus still calls us to love those who are antagonistic to us. How then should we show love?

Firstly, it can be as simple as greeting those who do not show favour to us or whom we have tension with (v. 47). Secondly, we can meet their practical needs (v. 45). Thirdly, and what some of us might find the hardest to swallow as it is the most intimate, would be to pray for them (v. 44). This is what Jesus did as he hung on the cross (Luke 23:34). Our natural response would be that it is far too difficult – how can I sincerely pray for someone who has hurt me so deeply?

In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus says that we can rejoice in persecution as our reward in heaven is great. The command to love our enemy is thus a command to find our satisfaction and hope in God and not in the way we are treated by others, and this in turn will empower us to love them.

REFLECTION

- *Am I theoretically in agreement with Matthew 5:43-48 but secretly harbouring hate and anger towards those who oppose me?*
- *Am I willing to lay down my pride and let go of my hatred, and extend love to my enemies as an act of obedience to God?*

Sunday Sermon

The Saviour of the World

John 3:1-17

5 MAR

2nd Sunday of Lent



Something that “shines” from the passage or sermon - whatever impacts you most, or draws your attention.



Anything that is difficult to understand, or a question you would like to ask the writer of the passage or God.



A personal application for your life.



Name someone whom you can share and benefit from what you have learned.

Be Imitators Of Our Father

Luke 6:36-38

DAY 11
6 Mar, Mon

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daniel 9:4-10, Psalm 79:8-9, 12-13

Revd Andrew Yap
Priest

Starting with the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20), Jesus preached on the new kingdom values with which we, the “children of the Most High” (v. 35) are called to embrace and thereby transform the world we live in. Kingdom values which Jesus Himself exemplified through loving His enemies, blessing those who curse Him and turning His other cheek to His assailants. He now urges us to be imitators of our Father by being merciful to others, to not judge nor condemn, but to forgive.

Taking this passage in its context, the message here is not telling Christians that we should never judge. We have been told to discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14); to address brotherly transgressions and deal with sin in the community (Matthew 18:15, 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, Ephesians 5:3-14). Rather, this judging is about our attitudes towards other people in light of God’s mercy towards us.

Why did Jesus jump straight to tell us to “judge not, and you will not be judged”? Because He knows the human heart all too well. When someone has done wrong, fail to meet our expectations, or simply for holding a different opinion, we judge, criticise and condemn all too quickly, and often with mixed, impure motives and prejudiced minds. When this occurs in a church, we find ourselves in a harsh, judgemental, critical and ungracious community. However, we are called to be otherwise, to always build-up, rather than tear-down. Having experienced the fullness of God’s love and forgiveness, let us then aspire to be imitators of our Father, by always being “kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave [us]” (Ephesians 4:32).

REFLECTION

- *Recall the times when you felt judged, condemned, criticised or harshly treated in the church. How did it feel? Pray to God for strength to forgive the person or persons.*
- *Have you also been harsh, critical or prejudiced towards someone else? Pray for the Holy Spirit to change your heart and to use you to make your church community into a more loving and gracious place.*

True Spiritual Authority

Matthew 23:1-12

DAY 12
7 Mar, Tues

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20, Psalm 50:8, 16-23

Kamala Christie
Cell Group Leader

Jesus attacks the religious hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees and teaches us that the only true spiritual authority comes from our Heavenly Father (v. 9) and that we have only one leader, Christ (v. 10). He warns us not to follow the examples of the scribes and the Pharisees as they are self-appointed (v. 2 'seated themselves'), hypocritical (v. 3 'they say things and do not do them'), abuse their authority (v. 4 'tie up heavy burdens', 'unwilling to move them') and are prideful (vv. 5-7 'to be noticed by men', 'love the place of honour', 'respectful greetings and titles').

Believers are all brethren, since God is our true spiritual Father, and since Jesus is our real teacher and leader. The teachers and leaders of God's people must remember that they are always fellow learners with the saints. They are still children of the heavenly Father, and they are ever subject to Jesus Christ.

So, if we are leaders, we should instead follow Christ's example and serve humbly. We lead and teach faithfully based on the authority of His word, with total dependence on Him and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He calls us, strengthens us, gives us gifts and guides us as we serve Him. Jesus never asks us to do anything that He Himself was not willing to do. He prayed, taught scripture, showed compassion and submitted to the will of God in everything, even to the point of death.

REFLECTION

- *As church members, how should we be praying for and encouraging our leaders to glorify the Lord in their ministry?*
- *As church leaders, how can we improve as godly models to be more Christ-like in encouraging others to love and serve the Lord?*

Upside Down Leadership

Matthew 20:17-28

DAY 13
8 Mar, Wed

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jeremiah 18:18-20, Psalm 31:4-5, 14-18

Dinah Tan
Pastoral Staff

Salome, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, met Jesus. She wanted the seats of honour for her two sons in His kingdom. As a typical mother, she felt her sons deserved the best locations. Jesus responded with love to all three of them, but he made clear that they had missed the point of what he was doing.

To Jesus and the people who follow him, the main goal is not honour but humility. A little later, Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant."

To the world, this seems upside down. It makes no sense. But Jesus changed things by what he himself did. Jesus is God, and Jesus had all the power and authority in the universe. But in order to become human like us, Jesus gave up that power. He willingly suffered and died on a cross to pay for our sins. And because of God's great justice and mercy, Jesus' humility and service resulted in something amazing and great: the salvation of the world and the defeat of death.

In God's kingdom where Jesus reigns, humble service leads to great success. It seems like an upside-down way of understanding things, but it makes sense because of what Jesus has done and how Jesus has loved the world.

As we receive the love of God, let us show that amazing love to the world.

REFLECTION

- *What humble service is God asking you to do in your community of influence?*
- *Whom can you serve and build up, for Jesus' sake, today?*

The Rich Man And Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

DAY 14
9 Mar, Thurs

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 5

KC Shih
Cell Groups Cluster Leader

This pointed story underlines the failure of the Pharisees to truly believe the Scriptures in which they boasted. If they had believed, they would not have loved money, but the poor. They would not have built personal estates, but rather would have fed the hungry. Instead, like the rich man in the story, Jesus' money-loving critics' dress in purple and fine linen and live in luxury every day while beggars lay outside their gates.

Many believe that this is not a parable because actual people are identified in this story. In parables, people are characterised as "servants," "sower," "master" or "guest." In no parable is any actor given a personal name, such as Lazarus is here. Yet whether or not Lazarus and the rich man were real individuals, or merely representatives, the story contains one of Scripture's clearest pictures of the after-death experience. There is blessing for God's own, and torment for those who refuse His grace. And between these two states lies an uncrossable gap.

The choices we make during this life do fix our destiny. Those who wish can scoff at Jesus' warnings of the corrupting influence of wealth. But many have pushed heaven away while grabbing greedily for this world's worthless gold.

They will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead (v. 31). The teachers of the Law and Pharisees frequently demanded Jesus provide a "sign from heaven" to prove His messiahship (11:6; cf. Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:11). Why did He not provide it? Part of the answer lies in Scripture's emphasis on faith. We are to trust God and His Word to us. Yet part of the answer lies in unbelief. Whatever sign Jesus provided would not convince those determined not to believe. Even when Jesus did rise from the dead, His opponents refused to believe. If a person will not hear and respond to the Word of God, "to Moses and the Prophets," they simply will not be convinced.

Continued on next page

It is good for us to remember this when we share the Gospel with others. The Word of God is living and vital. It reaches human hearts, and those who are open to God respond. Those who do not believe will not believe, and would not even if we performed miracles before them. So we witness without hesitation, confident that where the seed of the Word finds fertile soil, new life will sprout.

REFLECTION

- *What is the central message of the text found in Luke 16:19 to 31? What lesson does the parable teach?*
- *What are some of the reasons people whom you know choose to disbelieve in God? Pray for them.*



Fruits In Their Seasons

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

DAY 15
10 Mar, Fri

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28, Psalm 105:16-22

Veronica Wong
Cell Group Leader

Through this parable, Jesus demonstrated to the esteemed and self-righteous religious leaders, their failure and wickedness which resulted in their loss of God's kingdom. While the Jewish religious leaders had been entrusted by God with his 'vineyard', they did not fulfil their God-given duties as his 'tenants'.

Instead of receiving the master's servants, they harshly mistreated one and killed another. And they even killed his son. Allegorically, the master's servants and sons would refer to the prophets of God and Jesus, his Son. For this reason, God judged them, and removed his vineyard from them. The master then entrusted the vineyard to other tenants who would give him the fruits in their seasons.

Through this parable, Jesus was gracious in warning these leaders that if they reject the true 'cornerstone' (Jesus), they would come under God's judgement. But even so, they sought to arrest Jesus (v. 46).

During this time of Lent, it is opportune to check ourselves on whether we are faithful 'tenants' of God's kingdom and thus producing fruits in season.

REFLECTION

- *Have we knowingly or unknowingly begun to lose our focus on God, placing our confidence and false security in the length of time we have been Christians, but neglecting the spiritual fruits that God is expecting from us? Let us hear and heed God's patient call to re-align our lives to His purposes above any human agenda.*
- *What are some examples of "fruits in their seasons" that God is expecting to receive? What is one practical and specific step that you can take that will lead to greater fruitfulness for the Lord?*

My Father's Love

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

DAY 16
11 Mar, Sat

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20, Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12

Jamie Choo
Pastoral Staff

The image of God in this story is that of a loving parent, one who unconditionally and freely lavishes love to their children. Our God will go to amazing amounts of effort to embrace us. The loving father ran to the prodigal when he saw him far away, having waited for him longingly.

When the prodigal was given the inheritance he blatantly asked, from a father who was still alive, he chose to waste it. This free giving of love was seen again when the prodigal son returned home.

When the son "came to himself" he knew that he could go home and repent. When the older brother was angry about what he perceived to be unfair treatment, the father while assuring him of his love, defended the younger son. These are signs of a remarkable environment of love. When questioned by the older brother, the father lovingly explained, "you are always with me and everything I have is yours."

This story about God's love is also a story about us. All of us are either the prodigal or the older brother. Some of us are a mix of both. We may have been like the younger son who have wandered off from the father, or we may also be like the elder brother - self-righteous and legalistic in our faith; and unable to share God's joy, forgiveness and blessings with others.

Both brothers were equally "lost" and in need of the father's love and forgiveness. This parable shows us that God's love is freely given, lavish and unconditional. Can we see it? Like the prodigal son, genuine repentance helps us return home, back to the arms of a loving father.

So, if you are a prodigal, go home. If you are an older brother, open your hearts. If you are a mix of the two, go home with your hearts open.

REFLECTION

- How does this parable reveal God's love to you personally?
- Do you find yourself identifying more with the prodigal son, the elder brother or both?

Sunday Sermon

Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth

John 4:5-42

12 MAR

3rd Sunday of Lent



Something that “shines” from the passage or sermon - whatever impacts you most, or draws your attention.



Anything that is difficult to understand, or a question you would like to ask the writer of the passage or God.



A personal application for your life.



Name someone whom you can share and benefit from what you have learned.

Receive Christ Anew

Luke 4:24-30

DAY 17
13 Mar, Mon

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

2 Kings 5:1-15, Psalms 42:1-2; 43:1-4

Charles Leong
Diocesan Registrar

The people at the synagogue in Nazareth wanted to throw Jesus down the cliff after hearing that he would not deliver them from their ills. They were the same people who had earlier spoke well of Jesus after he revealed himself as the promised anointed one who would bring blessings, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2.

The people reacted this way because they saw Jesus merely as the “son of Joseph”, whose family they knew. Because of their presumptuous familiarity and unbelief, they were not able to see Jesus for who he truly is and receive him as their prophesied Messiah.

Likewise, Jesus reveals himself to us in the Bible. His identity and the totality of his salvation plan have been made known to us.

By his grace, we have been saved by his atoning sacrifice on the cross and are commissioned to live for the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:12).

To be effective disciples of Christ, we must not be like the people at Nazareth who took Jesus for granted, treated him with familiar callousness, and received their just reward in full: the denial of promised blessings.

We need to apprehend our faith anew, knowing him and walking with him more intimately by studying his word and praying fervently so that we can be effective imitators and witnesses of Christ, both in word and deed.

REFLECTION

- *In what ways have we been presumptuously over-familiar with God, trusting in our long-held faith and righteousness?*
- *Regardless of how long we have been believers, what should our response be when we apprehend anew the reality of Christ's person and atoning sacrifice?*

Like Drinking Poison

Matthew 18:21-35

DAY 18
14 Mar, Tues

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daniel 2:20-23, Psalm 25:3-10

Peter Lim
Pastoral Staff

When do we stop forgiving someone? When do we say enough is enough? Where do we draw the line? That was the essence of Peter's question (v. 21). Jesus answers with a hyperbole (77 times or 70 times 7) and the parable of the unforgiving servant.

There was a family member with whom I had a big fallout. Though the matter was resolved, this family member repeated the offence and I had to forgive the person again and again. It was not easy, it was painful. Every time the person fails, we forgive. Just like every time we fail, God forgives. We do not keep count because God does not keep count.

At my home church, something happened that wounded and hurt me and I eventually left, "burning bridges" behind me. During my "exile", God showed me that I must forgive those whom I felt had hurt me. Whether they were aware of what they did or even considered their action required forgiveness; I MUST forgive, it is not an option, it is an imperative.

I hesitated when I was asked to come on as staff in my home church. This meant coming back to the place of pain. I was afraid that I would be hurt again. Returning also meant a high probability of having to work with those who caused my past hurts. For several months after coming on staff, I avoided those people. However, I was convicted that if I have truly forgiven them (from my heart) then I should live it out. Instead of avoiding them, I would initiate interaction with them even though it was uncomfortable and felt fake. I found my attitude towards them changed as time passed.

*"Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting
for the other person to die." - St Augustine of Hippo*

Resentment leads to unforgiveness. Pray and forgive, just as we pray "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us".

REFLECTION

- Is there someone who offended or sinned against you whom you harbour resentment and have not forgiven?
- Have you offended somebody from whom you need to ask for forgiveness? Be it a friend, relative or family member; take steps towards reconciliation: ask God for forgiveness and courage to ask them for forgiveness.

I Have Come To Love

Matthew 5:17-19

DAY 19
15 Mar, Wed

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9, Psalm 147:13-20

Revd Joshua Raj
Priest

Jesus tells his disciples that he has come not to abolish the law or to criticize what the prophets taught but has come to fulfil the law. But He also reminds them that keeping the commandments is also important.

For the Pharisees, Jesus repeatedly disobeyed Jewish law and they would often criticise him for not obeying the law. They, however, did have grounds for their criticism of Jesus. Jesus did not obey or follow the law as the Pharisees thought it should be followed.

The Pharisees lived by the letter of the law. But Jesus lived by the law of love. Jesus followed most of the Jewish laws and customs. But when it came to the people in need of love and compassion, Jesus lived by the law of God. For Jesus, the first two commandments are the foundation for the other eight commandments: love of God and love of neighbour. Love should come first.

Sometimes, we can become legalistic as the Pharisees. We observe another person doing something that we may judge as not correct. But it is not in our place to judge. We do not appreciate it when another judges us. Yet, we fall into the trap of judging others.

We are more likely to find fault with people we may not like or who simply gets on our nerves. Let us be aware of our thoughts and judgments especially towards them.

We will never be perfect in fully keeping the commandments of God. We are, after all, human and not God. However, we can strive everyday to love others more fully and without judging.

The commandment to love is monumental with God, and it should be with us. Jesus commanded us to love one another, but not in commandment alone. We are to teach it and do it as He has.

REFLECTION

- *Do we love as Christ has commanded us to ?*
- *Do we obey, teach and live the commandments of the Lord?*

Choose Jesus!

Luke 11:14-23

DAY 20
16 Mar, Thurs

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jeremiah 7:23-28, Psalm 95:1-2, 6-11

Crystal Hong
Pastoral Staff

Jesus' identity was often contentious during his years of ministry. In today's passage, the source of his power and authority was challenged.

The casting of the mute demon was a powerful feat as the people during that time believed that a demon can only be cast out by knowing his name. The people marvelled at this act of deliverance as it would have been impossible for a mute demon to be cast out since the possessed man could not speak. Once again, Jesus displayed great power and authority through his teachings and over the spiritual forces.

This invited questions about his identity and source of power. Was it from Beelzebul (prince of demons) or from heaven? While there was much speculation, Jesus, being all-knowing was quick to address this by establishing his God-given authority and the coming of the kingdom of God. He logically questioned those present to think how the casting out of the mute demon would benefit Beelzebul, the very prince of demons. Jesus is stronger and will have ultimate victory over the prince of demons, disarming him (takes away his armour) and crushing him (divides his spoil) totally.

Jesus' God-given power and authority is able to overcome all principalities and schemes of the devil. The people who were present experienced the power of Jesus, yet they doubted and would not believe. Jesus called the people to be with Him and warned them of being against Him (v. 23). There is no room for us to hold a neutral view of the kingdom of God. Being in the world makes us vulnerable to following its ways, but as followers of Jesus, we are called to follow His ways. Choose Jesus! the ultimate Victor over all powers and authorities.

REFLECTION

- *Have you recently fallen into using the ways of the world to deal with people or situations? Perhaps Jesus is calling you to choose His ways, would you take some time to pray and ask for His guidance?*
- *Have you ever doubted the power of Jesus to deliver you from your situation? Gather some friends to pray for you and trust in Him and His perfect timing.*

You Are Not Far From The Kingdom Of God

Mark 12:28-34

DAY 21
17 Mar, Fri

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Hosea 14, Psalm 81:6-10, 13, 16

Phillip Quek
Lay Reader

Jesus had more than 40 conversations with different people. In some cases, Jesus initiated and others were third parties triggered conversations.

Here, we read of a scribe who, after hearing Jesus' conversation, was deeply impressed with Jesus' response and decided to join in the conversation. Jesus saw the scribe spoke wisely and said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (Mark 12:34).

What does it mean to be "not far from God's kingdom"?

The scribe was known as an expert in God's law. He came to ask a question because he was impressed by how well Jesus answered everyone else's questions. The scribe knew Jesus' answers were deeply rooted in the Old Testament, and it highlighted two important passages from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (to love God) and Leviticus 19:18 (love your neighbour). Mark indicated that understanding of God's word alone brings us close to, but not into, the kingdom.

The scribe not only knew but also agreed with God's law. In verses 32-33, he praised Jesus' response. He appeared to understand and agree with the intent of the law, but he did not follow through on his obedience. The Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Commandments, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan are all applicable to one's daily life. The law came to show us that we need to be saved. The law does not save us!

The scribe made an excellent initial move. He approached Jesus. He didn't get close enough, though. Jesus did not come to teach you how to be kind to others. His mission on earth is to save us from sin and death. To deliver us from the overwhelming weight of the law. He is the door through which we can enter God's kingdom. His blood shed to cleanse us of our sins and to give us hope, to give us God's peace.

REFLECTION

- *Imagine what goes through the mind of the scribe when Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God". Where are you in relation to God's kingdom?*
- *On what basis can we be assured or confident that we are received into God's kingdom?*

The Pharisee And The Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

DAY 22
18 Mar, Sat

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Hosea 5:15-6:6, Psalm 51:1-2, 17-19

Adeline Hee
Pastoral Staff

In Jesus' time, the Pharisees were often highly regarded for being 'model students' in religious piety in the way they acted in public. On the other hand, tax collectors were despised for collecting taxes from their own people on behalf of the Roman rulers and for profiting off from a cut of the collection. Imagine the people's surprise when Jesus told this parable to them and commended the 'worst of the worse' tax collector, rather than the 'model student' Pharisee.

In the parable, the Pharisee was portrayed as a proud hypocrite, whereas, the tax collector's humility was something Jesus commended.

As we examine this parable, we see the Pharisee comparing himself with other men, putting them down while lifting himself up and listing his pious acts. His attitude and posture before the Lord were one of pride, preoccupation with himself and confidence in his own works.

In contrast, the tax collector offers nothing to defend himself. Instead, he comes before the Lord with his eyes downcast, and beating his breast in utter humility. He acknowledges his sinfulness as he measures himself against the standard of the holy God, and trusts in God's mercy alone to accept him. Are we like the Pharisee or the tax collector?

In this season of Lent, as we reflect on the Lord's ministry and events leading up to His Passion, may we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the innermost thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. And may we allow the Lord to lead us to true repentance, trusting not in our own efforts and merits but in his 'manifold and great mercies', for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

REFLECTION

- What areas of our lives mirror the Pharisee's attitude?
- What can we do to let go of the things we take pride in and trust in God alone?

Sunday Sermon

The Light of the World

John 9:1-41

19 MAR

4th Sunday of Lent



Something that “shines” from the passage or sermon - whatever impacts you most, or draws your attention.



Anything that is difficult to understand, or a question you would like to ask the writer of the passage or God.



A personal application for your life.



Name someone whom you can share and benefit from what you have learned.

Acting On Divine Revelation

Matthew 1:18-25

DAY 23
20 Mar, Mon

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

2 Samuel 7:4-16, Psalm 89:26-36

Revd Alvin Toh
Priest

What a travesty! Getting pregnant and then attributing it to God? That must have been what most would have thought of Mary's pregnancy, including Joseph. It would have been an act of adultery deserving of being stoned to death in Jewish practice. By being betrothed, Mary was already legally bound and married to Joseph according to their Jewish two-step process of the act of marriage. Personally, it was also an act of infidelity and betrayal of her vows to Joseph, as Mary was expected to keep herself pure before the completion of the second step in the marriage when she would be brought into the family home.

By deciding to act honourably and divorcing Mary quietly instead of publicly shaming her, Joseph was already choosing the better option of the two. But God was calling Joseph to do something more.

An angelic appearance and revelation of God's divine plan to Joseph changed everything. It was no longer just the rational decision of protecting his family's reputation and Mary's honour, but now a matter of faithful obedience to God's divine revelation!

God was calling Joseph to put his own reputation on the line by accepting Mary and the child from the Holy Spirit as his own. It may mean being ridiculed by his relatives and friends who would doubt the angelic revelation. It may invite gossip and various accusations from others. But nonetheless, Joseph responded with absolute faith and total obedience: taking Mary under his roof, accepting the child conceived by the Holy Spirit, and naming him Jesus. By his acts of faith, Jesus is then born "the son of David", positioned to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Continued on next page

REFLECTION

- *For over 400 years, there had not been any record of divine revelation up until Joseph's time, and so it was 'natural' for Joseph to decide based on what was most rational and just. Have you made decisions in this past year based on what we think is most logical and rational? Make a commitment to seek the Lord in everything (Philippians 4:6-7) rather than our own wisdom.*
- *Have there been occasions when God has called you to do what is beyond your comfort level? Make a decision to respond in faith and obey the Lord when He prompts, even when it seems absurd or when we do not fully understand why.*



Do You Want To Be Healed?

John 5:1-3, 5-16

DAY 24
21 Mar, Tues

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12, Psalm 46:1-8

Rev'd Soon Soo Kee
Priest

When Jesus asked the lame man at the pool by the Sheep Gate, "Do you want to be healed?", he seemed to be asking an obvious question. Jesus could see that he was among those who were "blind, lame and paralyzed" with the hope of healing from the water at the pool.

The lame man replied that he could not get into the pool because others beat him in the rush to get into the water. Jesus then said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk".

As he did so, the lame man was observed by the Jews who faulted him for carrying his bed on the Sabbath. They then turned their anger towards Jesus for breaking the Sabbath.

This incident reveals to us the deep perception of our Lord Jesus Christ. Firstly, Jesus saw deeper into the lame man than he could himself. Jesus' question about healing for the lame man was deeper than physical healing for he told him later, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you". He realized why Jesus asked a question that was so obvious for thirty-eight years; Jesus was referring to a deeper healing of body and spirit.

Secondly, Jesus saw clearer and deeper than the Jews. They were concerned for the law of Sabbath and could not see how the deep needs of a person have to be met, even on a Sabbath.

In Mark 2:27, Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". Jesus perceived that the lame man's needs justified his Sabbath ministry.

REFLECTION

- When we seek God's help, are we open to Him to reveal our deeper needs that have to be met as well?
- Do we have any pre-conceived beliefs that distort our perception of God?

Life In The Son

John 5:17-30

DAY 25
22 Mar, Wed

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 49:8-15, Psalm 145:8-18

James Tan
Pastoral Staff

The defence Jesus made of his work, saying “My Father is working until now, and I am working” was deemed offensive to the Jews; because he had called God His Father, and thus had made himself equal with God.

The Jewish leaders not only accused him of breaking the Sabbath, but of the greater sin of blasphemy against God. In response to the charge, Jesus declared that his healing work on Sabbath was in perfect alignment with his Father’s will and purpose, one that honours his Father (vv. 19, 23). By doing so, he gave testimony to His Father’s love and compassion.

Further qualifying his Sabbath work, Jesus spoke of the greater works he would do as the Son of God (his deity), by giving life to the dead and executing judgment. He referred to God the Father as his most credible witness (vv. 20-23), which the Jews contested.

The Jews knew from the Old Testament that only God is capable of giving life or bringing the dead back to life. In Deuteronomy 32:39 God says, “I myself am He! There is no god beside me. I put to death and bring to life.” They also knew that God would bring judgment on them one day. Deuteronomy 1:17 declares, “Judgment belongs to God.”

The key verse in what Jesus says is John 5:24: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

Jesus’ word calls us to respond by faith, believing that he was the one sent by God to give us everlasting life, and through knowing and trusting in Him, we are free from judgment because he has paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.

REFLECTION

- What did Jesus say to the charges made against Him (vv. 17, 19-23)?
- What is the promise Jesus makes to those who believe in Him (v. 24)?

Burn And Shine For Jesus

John 5:31-47

DAY 26
23 Mar, Thurs

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Exodus 32:7-14, Psalm 106:19-23

Lim Chin Kai
Choir Director

Jesus describes the testimony of John the Baptist as “the burning and shining light” who shone with truth and burnt with passion for Jesus. His mission in life is simply to point everyone to Jesus, the Messiah! What an appraisal to receive from our Lord Jesus!

Does it not stir you to want to be seen as the “burning and shining light” for Jesus? John’s testimony is Jesus’ testimony that bore witness to the Father God Himself. Sadly, though Jesus provided ample testimony, and yet they did not believe in him! They searched the Scripture, and yet they did not come to Jesus to have life!

What is missing? Their hearts were displaced! They were more concerned with receiving applause from one another, for their knowledge and works, rather than with seeking the glory that comes from God.

Am I living for the audience of ONE true God, or living for the applause of many others? The religious leaders were blinded by their quest for limelight that they missed being the “burning and shining light” for Jesus. They were deafened by the roaring applause of men that they missed the voice of God.

Today if you hear His voice,

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

(‘The Heavenly Vision’, also known as ‘Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus’ written by Helen Howarth Lemmel in 1918.)

REFLECTION

- Are you living for the audience of the one true God, or are you living for the applause of many others?
- Do you desire to be a “burning and shining light” for Jesus? If yes, what is God asking you to do?

Who Is Jesus To You?

John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

DAY 27
24 Mar, Fri

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jeremiah 26:8-11, Psalm 34:15-22

Patricia Aw
Pastoral Staff

In today's passage, we see the people of Jerusalem questioning who Jesus really was. The Jews sought to kill him (vv. 1, 25), and Jesus had to go to the Feast of Booths privately. The people wondered if the religious authorities believed that Jesus was the Christ, while claiming to know where Jesus came from. They knew that Jesus grew up in Nazareth; they knew his mother, his brothers, and sisters. Jesus declared that he had not come of his own accord, but he was sent by God, whom they did not know (v. 28). This must have shocked the Jews, as they prided themselves on knowing God, in contrast to the Gentiles, who worshipped many false gods.

Today, we have the full scriptures and it is easy for us to criticise their doubt and lack of faith, but who is Jesus to you?

The Gospel of John was written with an explicit purpose – to show that Jesus is the Son of God, “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31)

John took great pains to explain who Jesus was, where he came from, and where he was going. The miraculous signs and the seven “I AM” statements amplified what Jesus’ actions and teachings said about him.

I grew up as a nominal Christian, though I was very religious and attended church every Sunday. To me, Jesus was my ATM or vending machine. I only asked him to solve my problems and to bless me. It was only after I was born again and filled with the Holy Spirit that I had a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus. Today he is my Lord, Saviour, Master, and Friend.

You may call yourself a Christian but who is Jesus to you?

REFLECTION

- *John's main objective in writing this gospel is to persuade us to believe in Jesus, that we may have life in his name. Are you living the abundant life that Jesus promises “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”? (John 10:10)*
- *Think about who Jesus really is to you.*

Purpose Of Our Lives

Luke 1:26-38

DAY 28
25 Mar, Sat

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 7:10-14, Psalm 40:5-11

Judy Teo
Cell Groups Cluster Leader

Lent is a time to evaluate the purpose of our lives. God has created each one of us to fulfil a specific purpose in life, but we often make choices based on our perceived priorities that are contrary to God's will. Obedience to God's will is not always easy, but required as it means to exercise our deep faith and trust in Him. Part of God's plan for all His people is to put His work in our hands. God calls ordinary people like you and me to be the church, the body of Christ in this world. Sometimes God opens a door to when and where to serve in a specific ministry.

Throughout the Bible, God called many people to serve Him. He gave them a plan of action and confirmed to them that He was sufficient in providing for the challenge and that He would supply all their needs, so they could serve His purpose. Just to name a few, Moses was called to lead his people out of their bondage in Egypt. David was called by God to deliver the people of Israel from the strongholds of the Philistines.

Today's devotional passage, Mary's calling held a great honour, to have the privilege of being the mother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

She had been given much unmerited favour, but it would also demand great suffering and pain. Her submission to God's plan would cost her dearly, yet she was willing to answer God's call, to step out in faith and serve Him.

Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38).

REFLECTION

- What is God's call and purpose for your life?
- Will you answer God's call, for the purpose He has for you to step out in faith and serve Him?

Sunday Sermon

The Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-45

26 MAR

5th Sunday of Lent



Something that “shines” from the passage or sermon - whatever impacts you most, or draws your attention.



Anything that is difficult to understand, or a question you would like to ask the writer of the passage or God.



A personal application for your life.



Name someone whom you can share and benefit from what you have learned.

**"NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU,
Go, And From Now On Sin No More"**

John 8:1-11

DAY 29
27 Mar, Mon

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Joshua 2:1-14, Psalm 23

Rev'd Canon Louis Tay
Priest

This account of Jesus being confronted by the scribes and Pharisees took place in the Court of the Gentiles as the woman caught in adultery was brought to him. Jesus was seated (assuming the authoritative posture of a teacher of the Law and judge), yet the Messiah "bent down" (and "stood up") twice alluding to his coming also as our atoning saviour and the empowering Christ.

Jesus then declared, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (cf. Deuteronomy 22:22-24). When the religious leaders heard this, they left one by one. We also note that the other equally guilty party, the adulterous male was either released or he absconded!

Jesus' next question addressed the woman standing before him, "Has no one condemned you?". Then he said, "Neither do I condemn you, go, and from now on sin no more." (v. 11). Jesus spoke as her judge, the standard of righteousness and the sinless atoning sacrifice for her sins (Romans 3:23, 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Acts 17:31). Just like this woman caught in adultery, we have Jesus as our great high priest, one who is able to sympathize with our weakness, and from whom we can find mercy and grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16).

We need to remember that though we are saved by grace through faith from sin's penalty (our sins of commission and of omission) and from sin's power, we are also saved and empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve in righteousness (Ephesians 2:10). Through which we are given the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) and Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) to live out.

REFLECTION

- *Am I aware of the vileness and consequences of sin and the penalty Christ paid for me? (Ezekiel 18:20; John 3:16; Matthew 10:28; 2 Corinthians 5:21)*
- *At Lent and at all times do I discipline myself in Christ by the means of grace (Word, Prayer, Fellowship, Sacraments and Witness) as a fruitful witness to Jesus? (Matthew 24:14)*

Who Is Jesus?

John 8:21-30

DAY 30
28 Mar, Tues

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 102:1-3, 16-23

Dr Stanley Lai
Diocesan Chancellor, PCC

This passage continues with the poignant encounter between Pharisees and Jesus. It is evident that the Jewish religious leaders continued to struggle with the identity of Jesus, and disbelieved His mission. They were evidently talking at cross purposes with Jesus. There are statements by Jesus in this passage that amount to declarations, against the sober warning of coming judgment.

When the religious leaders asked Jesus directly, “Who are you?”, it showed that like so many in the world, they remained deaf to His word (see John 8:43). In response, Jesus declared the truth about the Father and what He had heard from the Father. Jesus’ ministry showed that He lived to please His Father, and that He did nothing on His own without the Father.

This passage reminds us of the prevailing dogma and disbelief that pre-believers and even (some) church leaders still demonstrate in this world. At the same time, there would also be a remnant of those who put faith in Jesus, based on what they have heard and this goes to the heart of our worship. In the later part of John 8, Jesus is far more direct with those who have heard but still choose not to believe (“You of your father the devil...” vv .42-47)

During this period of Lent, let us pray and reflect over Jesus’ words, His ministry on earth, as well as our own discipleship, trust and obedience in the Lord.

REFLECTION

- *Are we so trapped in the dogma and trends of conformity of the world that we fail to remind ourselves of God’s plan, forgiveness and eternal life? What practical steps should we take to alleviate this?*
- *How effective are we in explaining to pre-believers the mission of Jesus Christ and what He was sent into this world to do?*

The Truth Will Set You Free

John 8:31-42

DAY 31
29 Mar, Wed

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28, Psalm 148

Alvin Yin
Chairman, Servers' Guild

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (vv. 31-32).

Reading these verses, it may sound easy to become Jesus' disciples and to know the truth which will then set us free. But it is more than just mere belief in the word of God to be Jesus' disciples. To be strengthened by God's word and His truth, we must read the Bible regularly and fully understand the Scriptures. It is also important to form a personal relationship with God – by trusting in him, obeying his word and entrusting our lives to him. Then we can truly become his disciples who know the truth.

And after we become his disciples and know the truth, what does the truth free us from? In verse 34, Jesus says everyone who practises sin is a slave to sin. Many people find it comfortable to live in sin. Well, sin brings worldly pleasures and privileges. We often think that we can easily break free from sin. But most of the time, sin gradually takes root in us, binds us and we become slaves to sin. It dominates our lives and we begin to neglect our spiritual life. The truth (word of God) will enable us to break the bondage of sin.

There are many Christians today who are like the Jews whom Jesus spoke to. We think that we have our salvation sealed because we have been baptized and confirmed, partake in Holy Communion every Sunday, been a church member for many years, attend cell group meetings regularly, etc. During this period of Lent, we should examine our hearts and ask ourselves, would these make us true disciples of Jesus and know the truth so that we can break free from the bondage of sin?

REFLECTION

- Does God's word have a place in your life?
- Jesus says "if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples". How do you abide in his word?

Word Of Life

John 8:51-59

DAY 32
30 Mar, Thurs

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Genesis 17:3-9, Psalm 105:4-9

Tony Tan
Pastoral Staff

The Jews were talking with Jesus, and he told them that if they kept his word, they will never see death (v. 51). That was unimaginable and must have shocked many of them who heard Jesus. Never see death? We all know death comes to everyone. At some point in our future, we will die. This is the natural course of life.

The Jews retorted that Abraham and the prophets were greater than Jesus, and yet they all died. They then questioned Jesus, "Who do you make yourself out to be?" (v. 53)

How did Jesus respond to them? He responded by introducing them to his Father, and that his Father is the one who will glorify him. Even though the Jews claimed to know God, Jesus said that they did not really know him. Jesus knows who God is because he keeps God's word.

Truly, the Jews closed their hearts to who God is. They may know much about the Torah (Law), but did not know who the God of the Torah is. They did not believe Jesus' claim about himself, and even less so about his existence before Abraham.

Today, let us examine our own hearts. Do we trust Jesus' word when he says, 'if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death' (v. 51)? Jesus is right beside you, through your pains and struggles in life. Trust in his word.

REFLECTION

- Take time to reflect who Jesus is to you right now in your life. Surrender your life once again to Jesus.
- Do you truly believe you have eternal life in Jesus? What is your source of assurance?

God And Man In One Person

John 10:31-42

DAY 33
31 Mar, Fri

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Jeremiah 20:10-13, Psalm 18:1-6

Tan Wui Gee
Lay Reader

Jesus was at the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah as known in modern time. When Jesus proclaimed that “I and the Father are one” (v. 30), an angry mob of religious leaders confronted and accused Him of blasphemy. In making the statement, Jesus was saying that He and the Father are in unity in purpose and will.

The statement so infuriated the religious leaders that they picked up stones and attempted to kill Jesus as the law of Moses laid down the death penalty for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16). Jesus responded with three arguments to reprove their violence. Firstly, the many “good works” He did, such as healing the sick, raising the dead and feeding the hungry, clearly demonstrated that they came from the Father (v. 32). Secondly, Jesus used Psalm 82:6 to assert that if it is not blasphemy to call earthly unjust judges “gods” because of their office, then it is His right to call Himself the “Son of God” (vv. 34-36). Thirdly, Jesus was “consecrated and sent into the world” by the Father to carry out His Father’s mission of salvation (v. 36).

Jesus further reasoned with His opponents: “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me.” But if the religious leaders do not trust Him, they should believe His works so that they may realize and understand that the Father is in Jesus, and He is in the Father as equals (vv. 37-38).

His argument fell on deaf ears and the mob tried to apprehend Him. But Jesus retreated from them as He could not be restrained unless He willed: “No one takes (my life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18).

REFLECTION

- *The Jews could not understand that Jesus and Father are one. Sometimes our understanding of this is also hindered by our limited knowledge of God’s purpose and allowing our faith to be compromised by our logical and scientific mindset. How can we overcome this hindrance?*
- *The works of Jesus are the works of sacrificial love. This is the love we know of Him – love unto death. Unlike Jesus, ours are works of conditional love when they are contingent on certain behaviours or actions. What should we pray for our hearts to be made more like the heart of Jesus?*

Two Responses: Faith Or Worry

John 11:45-57

DAY 34
1 Apr, Sat

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Ezekiel 37:21-28, Psalm 121

Joshua Koh
Pastoral Staff

Jesus had just performed a great miracle and yet we read that there were two very different responses from the people. One group decided to put their faith in God (v. 45) while another grew worried, fearing that His presence and influence would threaten their way of life (vv. 47-48). How would we have responded if we were them?

A few years ago, I started university with a desire to land a prestigious banking job upon graduation but God later revealed that it was not His plan for me. Yet, He did not specify where He was leading me. Soon, I was in my final semester navigating a tumultuous job market amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. While many of my peers were sending out up to a hundred job applications each, I was however, at a loss – lacking clear career direction and feeling strongly that God was beckoning me to seek Him, and to apply purposefully.

In my struggle, I found myself similarly contending with two different responses. I could either see my circumstances as an invitation to have faith in God or view His redirection as a disruption to my plans and worry about the accompanying uncertainty. After much prayer, I eventually sent out 2 job applications to roles that I felt would honour God and edify others, and shortly secured an offer.

Looking back, I see evidence of His faithfulness throughout the few years on that job and my journey had also encouraged my university juniors. When we respond in faith, God is glorified!

REFLECTION

- *How have you witnessed God's faithfulness in your life thus far?*
- *Is there an area of your life where you are at a similar crossroads? Would you submit it to the Lord and respond in faith? Take a moment to pray.*

Sunday Sermon

The Son of David

Matthew 21:1-11

2 APR
Palm Sunday



Something that “shines” from the passage or sermon - whatever impacts you most, or draws your attention.



Anything that is difficult to understand, or a question you would like to ask the writer of the passage or God.



A personal application for your life.



Name someone whom you can share and benefit from what you have learned.

Two Hearts

John 12:1-11

DAY 35
3 Apr, Mon

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 36:5-11

Samantha Foong
Lay Reader, PCC

This dinner in Bethany took place after Jesus had miraculously raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11). Here, we read of Mary and Judas Iscariot with very different conditions of their hearts.

At the dinner before all the guests, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with what was most costly to her – a pint of expensive perfume worth a year's wages. Mary expressed her adoration, gratitude and deep devotion to Jesus in that act of worship – even going counter to the Jewish convention in those days by letting her hair down to wipe Jesus' feet in the presence of men. Her love for Jesus far outweighed the disapproval she was likely to draw from the people. Mary knew Jesus personally, loved him wholeheartedly and gave of herself to him unreservedly because to her, Jesus was worthy.

Judas Iscariot, on the other hand, had his own hidden agenda when he rebuked Mary for what he deemed an extravagant waste. Judas' preoccupation was with his own interest – greed, covetousness and dishonesty crouching at the door of his heart. The description of Judas here gave an early hint of his ultimate betrayal of Jesus that was to come (John 18). Judas was among the twelve disciples who lived in Jesus' presence daily, followed Jesus throughout his ministry. Jesus considered Judas as a friend and entrusted him as steward over the money bag. Yet, sadly, from his heart intent and actions, one would ask if he truly knew or loved Jesus.

What is the condition of your heart?

PRAYER *Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

REFLECTION

- *Is Jesus truly your heart's inclination in all that you do, or are there the hidden elements of self-interest, even in the good works done for his name's sake? Will you ask the Lord to search your heart, lead you to repent and turn your heart rightly to him?*
- *Do you desire to know Jesus intimately and love him deeply? Will you surrender your heart to Jesus and ask him to renew it with overflowing love, adoration and devotion unto him?*

Looking At The Cross

John 12:20-36

DAY 36
4 Apr, Tues

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 71:1-14

Cheong Mun Sang
Cell Groups Cluster Leader

Some Greeks sought to see Jesus. The Gentile world had noticed the coming of a man who did miracles and had spoken with authority about the Kingdom of God. Jesus' message to the Greeks (Gentile world) was a total surprise to them. He told them that they needed to see him at the CROSS. In those days, the "cross" was seen as something horribly evil, where criminals were wickedly punished.

Jesus declared, "I will be lifted up" (v. 32) for all to see. As Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (John 3:14).

In the days of Moses, the people were bitten by fiery serpents when they sinned, but when they repented, God provided a bronze serpent and whoever looked at the bronze serpent were healed.

The message to the Greeks was clear; just believe and look to the Saviour and you be healed from your sins. In doing so, they will no longer walk in darkness and instead have become sons of light (v. 36).

It was not an easy thing for Jesus to go to the Cross. He had to sacrifice himself. Likewise, it will also not be easy for us to sow the seeds of this Good News. But as we faithfully sow with tears, we will also reap the harvest with joy (Psalm 126:5).

REFLECTION

- *What areas of your life do you need to look up to Jesus to receive healing?*
- *What are the sacrifices you have to undergo in order to sow the seeds of the Good News?*

One Of You Will Betray Me

John 13:21-32

DAY 37
5 Apr, Wed

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 70

Dr Jeremy Gwee
Lay Reader, PCC

If Jesus confronted me with these words “one of you will betray me”, I would be puzzled like Simon Peter because it cannot be me. After all, I am loyal to Jesus. The fact is that my loyalty to Jesus is questionable. Whenever I sin, I betray Jesus. The sinful nature in me overrides my desire to obey God.

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” Romans 7:18-19

And so I confess to God all areas of my life that I could have sinned, in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done and left undone, that I have not loved God with my whole heart, and I have not loved my neighbours as myself. And every time I confess, I question my sincerity because I will sin again.

In despair, I cry:

“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.” Romans 7:24-25

Only Jesus Christ is righteous and is my advocate with God.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:1-2

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

My confessions cannot save me. Only Jesus Christ can save me.

REFLECTION

- Have you ever considered that whenever we sin, we are also betraying Christ? In what ways?
- Describe a time when you confessed your sins and experienced God's faithfulness and forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Say a prayer thanking God for this experience.

Love One Another

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

DAY 38
6 Apr, Thurs

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14, Psalm 116:1, 10-19

Revd Kelvin Khoo
Priest

Lent is a timely reminder of Jesus' love for us by dying for our sins. We can do nothing to justify His sacrificial love but only to receive it by grace.

In today's gospel lectionary reading, Jesus mentioned the mark of discipleship. I believe most of us have no lack of discipleship classes and materials in our church. However, did we live out life as a disciple of Christ? To live it out is, as Jesus said, *"that you love one another."*

Back in my days working in the finance department, I remember reminding the sales team that the sales are only completed when the collections are in the bank. I see a similar situation as a disciple of Christ. We are disciples of Christ only when we love one another. Loving one another is an expression of our love for God.

Loving one another is by no means easy to do when we love with our strength. God is love, and therefore, He is the source of love. Be filled with the love of God daily so that we can love one another. We are weak, but God is strong. The next time you find it difficult to love, call out to Jesus, who will refill your love tank until it overflows to the people around you.

Let the period of Lent be a renewal of your love for God so that you can love one another.

REFLECTION

- *Do you feel love for what Jesus has done for you? Take time to pray and renew your first love with him.*
- *There will be people in your life that you will find difficult to love. In your prayer, ask Jesus for the strength and grace to be able to love them.*

Betrayal, False Accusations, And Death

John 18:1-19:42

DAY 39
7 Apr, Fri

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Psalm 22

Revd Canon Dr Lewis Lew
Vicar

Have you been betrayed by a friend or a loved one, falsely accused of things you have not done, and those circumstances led you to feel like that was the end of world? How will you respond if you are caught in similar situation? Our human tendency is to defend our reputation, fight for our rights, and to demand for compensation. Naturally, we do not like to be wronged and we do not like to be taken advantage of by people. What did Jesus do, when he was betrayed and falsely accused?

Amazingly, he responded differently. Despite that he was betrayed by Peter (John 18:15-27), one of His inner circle (Matthew 17:1-8), and leader of the group (Acts 2:1), Jesus forgave and restored Peter (John 21:15-19). Despite that he was falsely accused by the very people whom he came to save, Jesus allowed himself to be delivered to the cross (John 18:28-19:30). The thought of that was just incomprehensible. He neither put up a fight nor defended his rights, instead he chose to love the people who asked for his crucifixion. Jesus said, "I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus' death and resurrection brought life and hope to our world—a new life in Christ Jesus that frees us from the power of darkness, and the hope to eternal life. As we ponder over how Jesus responded to his betrayal, the false accusations, and the cross, may we be like Christ, learn to die to our human desire, in order to love as he has loved. For we are called to be witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8).

REFLECTION

- *Jesus' love for mankind, overwrote any desire to defend his reputation and to fight for his rights. What are some lessons we can glimpse for ourselves from our Lord's response to the betrayal, false accusations, and the cross?*
- *For some of us, we are needing to forgive people who have betrayed and wronged us, and for others, we are needing to be restored by our Lord before we can be launched out in ministry again. Read John 21:15-19. Pray for the Lord's restoration in your life.*

Holy Saturday

Matthew 27:57-66

DAY 40
8 Apr, Sat

***** ADDITIONAL READINGS

Job 14:1-14, Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

Revd Moses Israeli
Priest

"Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it ... Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb..." (Matthew 27:58-61)

Holy Saturday is also called the Holy Sabbath and the Great Sabbath. It is an empty day. It is silent. Witness of death with a tragic ending.

It seems as if the politicians have triumphed because another troublemaker is dead. The women did not leave the dead body to itself and they waited to see what would happen to it.

The body of Jesus was handed over for a private burial by a disciple of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, who nevertheless sought to honour Jesus over himself. It must have been a huge relief for the women when Joseph came and laid the body of Jesus in his own tomb.

This is to fulfil what the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:8-9.

Still the state gets stirred up by the warning that a dead body may not stop the story of Jesus. Indeed, a stop is what the political leaders and religious leaders wanted. Extra guards and a sealed tomb make security complete. They wanted to control Jesus' message of hope, making sure that the ending is clear from the cross to the sealed tomb.

REFLECTION

- *Joseph showed a humble generosity, respecting Jesus' dignity even in his death. How might we show compassion and care for the poor, noticing their needs in life and in death?*
- *Silence in waiting at the tomb draws us into a compassion for all who are waiting, or who hold on to fragile hope. Think of those who await medical results, of people in prison, and of those whose dreams have been crushed. How might we pray in silence for them?*

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