

The Rev. Kristin Krantz  
St. James', Mt. Airy  
2/14/16

Lent 1C  
Deuteronomy 26:1-11  
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16  
Romans 10:8b-13  
Luke 4:1-13

**As we enter this Lent, may we  
Pause,  
Reflect,  
Pray.  
Amen.**

We have entered Lent. Ash Wednesday reminded us that we are dust, and to dust we will return. We were invited into observing this holy season by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Some of us have accordingly given things up for these 40 days. Others have instead taken on a new discipline. Maybe you haven't thought about it at all. That's okay, it's never too late. In fact if you're looking for something, I invite you to peruse the table at the side of the church where you will find daily devotional readings from Henri Nouwen, CS Lewis, and Episcopal Relief & Development, a plan for reading the Gospel of Luke during Lent, and Lent Madness brackets, along with a Lenten family calendar and sticker-a-day activities for kids.

But no matter what you give up, or take on, or whether you just sink into the spirit of the season, the heart of our work this holy season is *repentance* and *reconciliation*.

To repent is to re-turn, or turn again, toward God and a God-center life. We need to repent because we lose our way, in so many ways.

We have estranged relationships with those in our lives. We have let our personal prayer practices lapse. We are in debt. We are *too busy* to honor taking Sabbath time. We keep in our possession a lot that we do not use, but from which we refuse to be parted.<sup>1</sup>

The list goes on and on; we wander in the wilderness in myriad ways.

We are told in Luke's Gospel that after his baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. For us mere mortals, it is more apt to say we find our way there on our own easily enough. And so it is we need to repent.

No one likes to admit mistakes or confess to sins. It is not easy. But it is important, because there is little possibility of *re-turning* to God if we refuse to name the sources of estrangement in our lives. And most importantly, confessing our sin is essential to reconciliation.

I believe reconciliation is at the center of what it means to be a Christian. And here I would define reconciliation as *re-turning* and *being re-turned*.

It is both the process of *re-turning*, and the arrival back to where we began, **with God at our center**. It is what we **do**, and **become**, once we have paused and reflected, once we have examined our lives and repented, asking for forgiveness.

It's what happens when we forgive others, and ourselves. It happens through prayer – the ways that we dialogue with God and the ways our actions in this world are *prayer- in-action*.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 2*, pg. 17.

It's what we *then* offer to the broken world around us – because once we are reconciled to God, we become a part of God's ministry of reconciliation.

This ministry is one of justice-making, of compassion, and of sharing God's abiding love. In short it is *belief in the good news* in action. As my theology professor Christopher Duraisingh put it, it is **faithing – a verb..**

It pulls together the three pillars of lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

+++

Prayer. C.S. Lewis once wrote: “I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time – waking and sleeping. It does not change God, it changes me.”

We must reflect in prayer. This season for slowing down, pausing and reflecting is a gift. Doing this not only helps us turn again and re-center our lives, it opens up our vision for the world.

How often do you, like me, find yourself not merely disheartened, but heartbroken, by current events? When we take our lament to God, we share the burden, and we can find the space to move through our heavy emotions and into the possibilities for how we can participate in change. Prayer is nothing short of living hope, and hope for transformation is essential for reconciliation.

This year prayer is the focus of our Lenten Series on Monday nights. Beginning tomorrow we will gather weekly to explore and try on different prayer practices. We will begin with Lectio Divina, Latin for sacred reading – and a wonderful way to pray with scripture.

From there we will move into Centering Prayer, praying with our bodies, Ignatian Contemplation, and the Anglican Rosary. Each session stands alone, so come to one or two – or all of them to add some depth to your personal prayer life.

+++

Fasting. The practice of fasting is about so much more than giving up food. Its essence is living simply and justly.

Maybe your fast is a carbon fast, where you choose to reduce energy use at home and in transportation. Or perhaps your fast is one for worker justice, where you pledge to not support restaurants and businesses that don't pay living wages. Have you been called to fast from some part of your daily life that has become a distraction, pulling you away from being fully present those in your life, and indeed God?

These acts of self-denial are not merely personal acts, they are actions that bind us together in community. They are signs of paying attention, and they shine the light of God's love into the shadows of our world. They are reconciliation.

+++

Almsgiving. Almsgiving, which includes acts of service, are direct ways in which we share the gospel. They are not done out of obligation; they are an expression of the overflowing love we have been shown. It is bringing food for the Mt. Airy NET. It is volunteering at the Thrift Shop. It is giving money to charities. And it is so much more – writing a note to someone who might need a kind word, taking a meal to someone, buying cat or dog food and taking it to an animal shelter.

These are actions that are God-centered, they are the in-breaking of reconciliation.

+++

So here we are. It is Lent. We are given these 40 days to once again look well within, that we might live out loud. May we accept this gift, and in turn offer it to the world.

~ AMEN ~