

The Reverend's Ruminations

Are you ready for a new season? I've asked that loaded question in years past, but realize that as Minnesotans, we inevitably find ways to enjoy each season—even if we do find ourselves longing for warmer, snowier, drier, or greener days when we're in the midst of the opposite! And while I'm pretty sure you ARE ready for a new season in the climatological sense, I'm really asking whether you're ready for another season in the life of the church. It seems I just came down from putting the Christmas tree in the attic, but the season of Lent will be arriving already by the end of February!

Lent brings up different thoughts or emotions for different people, but in general it is a season of soul-searching and repentance, a season for reflection and taking stock in preparation for Easter. Anticipation seems to naturally run high as Advent leads us toward the joys of Christmas, but each year we Christians should also see opportunity in journeying through the penitential season of Lent.

That may sound like a strange statement, but perhaps we should pause to understand the blessings that Lent can offer us. Among these is time intentionally set aside to allow us to focus on our own sins and then place them symbolically at the foot of the cross, knowing that Christ has already paid the penalty in our place. Another blessing comes from the chance to study the ways in which we symbolically journey with Jesus toward Jerusalem during the Lenten season. The good news is that this is not a solo pilgrimage—we journey alongside Jesus, the very one who calls us into discipleship.

As we observe the forty days of Lent (beginning with Ash Wednesday and continuing to Easter, not counting Sundays), many choose to give up the comfort of a favorite food, drink, or habit in order to gain a better understanding of our Savior's suffering and temptation in the wilderness. Others may use the season as an opportunity to make good on a New Year's resolution such as reading more of the Bible or completing a daily devotional. Whether or not you have done either before, I encourage you to consider ways in which Lent can be a meaningful season of drawing closer to Jesus. Without the darker moments of contemplation and repentance in Lent, the joy and celebration of Easter pales like the color of a cheap plastic egg left outside in the bright sun.

In the epistle readings from 1 Corinthians during the first three Sundays of February, the apostle Paul continues to address the members of a newly-formed Christian community in the Greek seaport city of Corinth. Much of his letter seeks to calm the dissent that has arisen among the Corinthian Christians, hoping to keep their focus correctly on the gospel of Christ. Among his nuggets of wisdom, St. Paul says, "*...the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*" (1 Cor. 1:18, NRSV) If we pause during the Lenten season to contemplate our faith, all of us should come to realize that the joy of Christ's birth must also include his death. Even though the celebrations of Christmas and Easter seem worlds apart, they are intimately connected for those who follow Jesus. During Lent, we can solidify that connection by placing ourselves into the journey with Christ toward the cross.

This year's Lenten services will start on Ash Wednesday (February 26) at 6:00pm in the sanctuary, and will continue each Wednesday evening through April 1st at 6:00pm in the small chapel. A service schedule for Holy Week (April 6-12) will be published in our upcoming newsletters. Bring your Bible and let us make the journey to Jerusalem together.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Cory Germain