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The Good News

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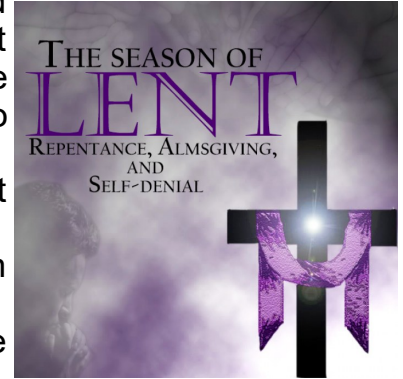
PASTOR KC

The Season of Lent is before us and it's a season once again to go inward. It is a precious time to ask ourselves the tough questions. Would you be able to answer any of the following questions?

“How has the Season of Lent helped you grow in faith?”

“What does salvation really mean to you?”

“In your life, how does the crucifixion give you freedom?”



As I wrote these questions, I too wondered how I would respond in a way that truly conveys my heart. The challenge leading a Congregation through Lent is that so much time can be spent on sin and grace and not enough focus on spirit and life. When his friend Lazarus died, the scriptures say, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). He then brought his friend back to life in miraculous fashion. Prior to that account, earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus said to his disciples, **“And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life”** (6:63), and this miracle proved his resolve!

I could present many more accounts that demonstrate Christ’s keen awareness of the balance between life and death. The biggest truth we learn from the resurrection is the focus on life and living fully in and through Jesus. Alan Watts offered the following sentiment regarding the notion of enjoying life each and every day:

“Enjoyment is an art and a skill for which we have little talent or energy...your entire education has deprived you of this capacity because it was preparing you for the future, instead of showing you how to be alive now.”

This quote can be a guide-post for all of us who become overwhelmed with achievement, tasks, work-flow, and the hustle of daily living. Just as the Lord leads us, challenges us, and calls us to serve, *he is with us in the present*. A quote by Thich Nhat Hahn that I used on a recent bulletin is another guide-post for me: **“Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.”** With that vision in mind, we must remember to live fully now and take nothing for granted. Allow this Season of Lent to nurture your heart and nourish your spirit. When Christ Jesus says his words are spirit and life—*I believe him*. Not only did Lazarus rise to tell it, Christ Jesus did too. Amen and amen.



- 5 Linda Pratt
- 11 Gary Miller
- Shirene Cece-Clements
- 26 Kelly Stephens
- 27 Tom Rzonca
- Beverly Ramaut



SHIRENE

On January 26, we held our annual meeting. It was really great to get all together and share a lunch. Thanks to everyone who helped with this. Also, thanks to everyone who put reports together. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and so happy to have Pastor KC be a part of it.

After our annual meeting, the members of the Consistory got together to decide who will hold offices. Erich had stepped down from the presidency (and we truly appreciate all the hard work he did with that and operations), but he will remain the operations person. I will be the President; Beth DeVlaminck will be the Vice President and both Gary Miller and Steve Popyk will remain in their positions as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Mike Gebert will take over as Co-Treasurer with Steve.



Consistory

Even though I have been in St Paul for several years, many may not know much about me, and I still feel like a newbie as so many have been here their whole lives. The reason I chose this church was because of the rummage sale which is likely one of the reasons I want it to continue.

The reason I chose to come back to church at all was because of a miracle. My niece had a difficult time with her last child's birth, and she lost a lot of blood, and I remember receiving the news at work that they couldn't save her. Right then I told the Lord that if he saved her life, I would go to church and be baptized. And the rest is history. Pastor Terri baptized me, and my niece's daughter is a teenager. To this day, the doctors don't know how she survived, but I know it was God's miracle.

Now on to Consistory news. We held our last meeting on February 11. For once, we had no major repairs to discuss. Minor things were the decision to not fix the fan in the lobby as the price tag was \$3,000-\$4,000 and we have lived with it this long. The other operation item was the toilet paper holders in the ladies' room downstairs. The holders are old and will be replaced, so that the rolls can again be off the floor.

We also knew that Pastor KC had used up his miles and that his trips up here from Florida were quite expensive. Consistory decided to help him with his travels for a limited amount of time, hoping by that time his place will sell. Remember, all are welcome at consistory meetings!



It is Lent, the time we commemorate Jesus's wilderness retreat and subsequent temptation, and search our own souls. After his baptism by John, as recounted in Luke, Jesus goes into the wilderness alone for 40 days, fasting and praying. While fasting that long would seem impossible even for the Son of God, the number of days Jesus was in the wilderness may not have been literally 40 days. The ancient Israelites sometimes used the numeral 40 as a synonym for "many," and it need not have been that exact number. Think of all the "40s" in scripture: The number of years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, the number of days it rained to cause the Flood, the number of days Moses was on Mt. Sinai, and the number of days Elijah subsisted on a single meal in the wilderness (presaging Jesus's

own trial) among many others. All of these may simply have been a way of saying "many." So, while Jesus was clearly in the wilderness a long time, we may not know exactly how long. Two things are important: he fasted for a long period while contemplating God, and something singular happened when he left the wilderness. Let us look at what this means for us.

On leaving the wilderness, Jesus is greeted by the Devil, who presents him with three temptations. The first one speaks to Jesus's physical needs. Scripture says that Jesus neither eats nor drinks in the wilderness and that he is "famished." Satan suggests that Jesus change a stone into bread. The temptation here isn't the bread itself, it's the misuse of a God-given ability to satisfy a physical need in an unnatural way. It's also the denial of the sacrifice (his privation) that Jesus offered to God in the wilderness, a sacrifice that God did not demand but which Jesus offered willingly. Jesus refuses the temptation, telling Satan that man "does not live by bread alone." What implications does this have for us? It focuses us on the spiritual side of our lives, as opposed to the physical aspect. It tells us that we should use our resources - our talents and our time - to grow spiritually, not just to satisfy our physical needs.

For the second test, the Devil takes Jesus to a mountaintop. From there he shows him all the kingdoms of the world, sweeping vistas of peoples and places the provincial Jesus would never have known or seen otherwise. All Jesus has to do is worship Satan, and the Devil will give dominion of all these kingdoms to him. There's a quandary here for me. How much does Jesus know of his divine nature? Does he know that he already has dominion over all these kingdoms? I like to think he does not know, otherwise this would not have been a temptation to resist. Resist it he does. He tells Satan that one should worship only the Lord God and serve only Him. The lesson here for us is simple. Our first obligation is to worship the Creator and to serve only Him. To serve that which is of this world is to worship the Devil. We do that when we place a higher priority on secular matters than on spiritual matters. Immerse ourselves solely in this world, and we turn our backs on God.

Next, Satan takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem. He directs Jesus to throw himself to the ground, saying that scripture states God will send His angels to save him from even having his foot dashed on a stone. Jesus has a ready answer for this: you shall not put God to the test! To test God in this way would mean that the one testing God has the right to judge God. Jesus would go on to teach that we will receive an answer for whatever we ask, but that is different from testing God. "To test" implies that God can "pass" or "fail," when in truth God's actions are their own justifications. God is answerable to no one, least of all to us. Yet we consistently take God to task. Why have you done this to me, O God? What have I done wrong? Why couldn't this have gone differently? Sometimes it seems we pray more often to ask why things couldn't be different, rather than to thank God for things as they are. And that's the message here. We inherently test God when we focus on our troubles and question why we have them. We do not have to like unfortunate circumstances (that would be unnatural) but we need to learn to accept them as God's will or the result of our own choices. We also need to understand that, when we pray for something, God will answer in His own way and time, but it may not be the way and time we expect or want. Our prayers should not be tests of God's love, but our heartfelt requests to a loving parent.

After Jesus resists the three temptations, Satan leaves until a "more opportune time." When that will be, only God knows. Literally.

Thank you, congregation, for your used greeting cards. They were donated to two ladies who use them to make crafts. Also, Sue gave us a challenge to donate clothing to Mt Calvary Lutheran Church in Detroit. It is for their "free clothing closet." I will be taking several bags of clothes to them this week. Their "closet" is the 3rd Saturday of each month. If you are interested in helping, please let me know. Thank you again for your generosity.

Kim



It's time for the 2025 Spring Raffle to be held on Palm Sunday (April 13). There will be 2 Sundays when the baskets will be on display and tickets available to purchase before and after church service—April 6 & 13. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5. Thank you for the support. Good Luck Everyone!

Women's Fellowship



Serve the Lord with Gladness
Psalm 100:2