



Pastor's Message for Lent

March 2017 - Lent is Upon Us

It seems as though we just finished celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ when all of a sudden the Church season of Lent is fast approaching. As we look to this season of Lent there are many things that we can do to observe what Lent means.

Lent is a season of the Christian Church year where Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and fasting in order to feel the presence of God near them.

Lent is the Forty days before Easter but excludes the Sundays before Easter. The forty days are symbolic of when Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by Satan. The beginning of Lent is Ash Wednesday. In this service of Ash Wednesday Christians recognize their mortality, repent of their sins, and are drawn back to their loving God through Jesus Christ. Many times during Lent Christians “give something up” in order to focus upon what Jesus has done for them.

On Ash Wednesday the focus is upon the placing of ashes on the forehead in the sign of a cross. Ashes throughout history have signified a sign of their mortality and repentance. Mortality, because when we die our bodies decompose and become ashes. Repentance, because when we feel sorry for sin, we prayerfully come to the Lord and place our sins at the foot of the cross. The pastor uses the shape of the cross on the forehead in order to remind us that our sins are forgiven and the gospel message of salvation in Christ Jesus has renewed our spirits and bought us back with the holy, innocent, suffering, and death of our Savior-Jesus Christ. It is His precious blood that washes away the sins we have committed and draws us back because of the unconditional love God has for us.

Long ago when people felt sorry for something they did wrong (sin), they would put ashes on their head and wear “sackcloth” (scratchy clothing) to remind them that sin is uncomfortable and leads to spiritual death if not confessed. This was their way of repenting. Confessing their sin and asking for forgiveness. We see this throughout the Bible in the Old Testament.

The ashes that are used for Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowd waved their palm branches in celebration of the King of the World entering Jerusalem are the ashes used for Ash Wednesday. These palms that were used in celebration of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem now become ashes of sorrow. These palms are burned and the ashes are then used on Ash Wednesday become ashes of sorrow instead of joy.

In Lent, many Christians commit to fasting or giving up certain types of luxuries as a form of penance. Many Christians also add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional or praying through a Lenten calendar, to draw themselves near to God.

Whatever you do as a part of your Lenten ritual the thing that is most important is that you focus on what God has done through Jesus Christ and that you remember Lent is not about you giving something up but knowing what happens during Lent, that we focus on repentance for our sins, confess them to the Lord, and know what the love of Christ has done for us as we anticipate Easter.

In Christ's Service & Love,

Pastor Rich