

Journey to the Cross

From the Desk of Pastor Rich

God's grace and mercy to all of you on this glorious day of our Lord.

As we continue to reflect on this Lenten season it is important that you understand why we, as Christians, see Lent as we do. Lent is that time of the year on the Church calendar that we focus on what Christ went through and did during these forty days on His road to the cross. With Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent we take time to reflect on Christ's journey to the cross and how it has had an impact on us.

We look upon Lent as a season of internal reflection, humility, self-denial, and sacrifice. So we may honor Christ in some small way as His journey to the cross resulted in the ultimate sacrifice – His death. A few things we can remember what Jesus had to endure both physically and emotionally during this time. The Garden of Gethsemane was emotional turmoil for Him as the thought of dying was so overwhelming He asked the Father “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*” (Mark 14: 36). As He was praying, one of the disciples Jesus had chosen, showed up with a small army in order to betray Him for none other than a few pieces of silver. As Jesus was arrested His closest friends made a mad dash to get away from Him. He was brought before two judges who would not pass judgment upon Him during which time they mocked Him, spit upon Him and beat Him. These are just a few of the things Jesus endured during His journey to the cross.

Our observance of Lent leads us to give something up in Lent to celebrate Jesus' journey to the cross. For so many years I have understood Lent as a season of denying ourselves something we are currently doing in our lives. Maybe you have given up eating chocolate (am I insane), or are attempting to use Lent as a reason to give up smoking or lose weight or who knows what else. But all kidding aside, the reason I believe we attempt to give something up is so we may catch a miniscule understanding of what Christ gave up.

Unfortunately we are never able to give something up that will ever compare in relation to what Christ endured or gave up. Nor the pain God the Father realized when He forsook Jesus in His death on the cross. (Matthew 27: 46; Mark 15: 34)

What I propose for this Lent is instead of giving something up why don't we add something to it. Why not look at what it cost Jesus in this Lenten season, to give up, and reflect on something we could do for others rather than deny ourselves something from our lives. For instance: why don't we add a prayer every day for something that God has blessed us with or pray for someone we know. Why don't we complement someone for a job well done or just encourage them with some loving words or what about making an attitude adjustment and instead of focusing on the negative, focus on the positive things. How many times do we gather together and hear such things as “I can't tell you how much I appreciate my boss,” or “My husband or wife does the most wonderful things for me,; or “I have the most thoughtful kids,; or even “Isn't it a great day to be alive,” and so forth. We seldom here comments such as these but what we do hear are the unfortunate and sad things, immoral things, what's going on in Hollywood, murders, sexual and physical abuse, and so many others. This is what we as a society are pounded with day after day from the media.

Wouldn't it be so much better to remember that Christ gave His life for you and for me so we would have the hope of eternal life. More than giving His life for us, Christ was raised from the dead so we could live with this hope knowing no matter what happens in our lives God gave His life so that we too could have life.

The idea of adding something during this Lenten season is so we might be able to focus more on others than ourselves. Isn't this truly the meaning of what Jesus was doing? Thinking of you and me along with our eternity.

So as we continue in this Lenten season let's see what kind of radical change may take place when we focus on the positive rather than the negative and embrace the beautiful news of the Lenten season in that Christ died and rose so that we may have life.

*May God grant you His blessings today and always,
In Christ's Service, Pastor Rich Stevenson*