

Day 1 (3/5 Ash Wednesday)

Read and meditate on: **Psalm 51:1-12**

****Use** it as a template for a time of confession

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge

5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me

11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me

.....

The Lenten season is about the sin that was the reason for the suffering and sacrifice of the Savior. It is about taking time to reflect on why we all needed such a radical move of redemption, to confess the hold that sin still has on us, and to focus on opening our hands, in confession and submission, and letting go of sin once again.

Lent is inescapably about repenting. Repentance is a change in direction, a Spirit-empowered turning around. Repentance, then, is the first step we make toward God. But to

turn toward God we must turn away from something else. That someone else is our sins. Lent, then, is about turning away from our sins and toward the living God. A season dedicated to repentance and renewal should not lead us to despair; it should cause us to praise God for His grace. Central to Lent is the idea that we need this kind of renewal consistently throughout our lives. We do not receive God's grace only when we turn to him at the beginning of our spiritual journey. God's grace meets us again and again. ("Lent" by McCaulley)

****Join us for Ash Wednesday Service tonight.**
6:00PM Dinner
7:00PM Service
@ Fellowship Hall

Day 2 (3/6 Thursday)

Read and meditate on: **Psalm 130**

****Note** what the psalmist says about who we are and who God is. Use this psalm to guide your prayer time today.

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

2 Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

3 If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

5 I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.

6 I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

7 Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

8 He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

.....



Under the shadow of the cross, sin doesn't surprise us any more, doesn't depress us anymore, and doesn't move us to deny or defend. Under the shadow of the cross, we remember who we are and what it is that we are dealing with. Under the shadow of the cross, we are required to admit that the greatest enemy we face is not difficulty or maltreatment from without, but the enemy of sin within. Under the shadow of the cross, we quit pointing fingers and begin crying out for help. Under the shadow of the cross, we are reminded that we are not in this battle alone; in fact, there we admit that we have enough power whatsoever to battle on our own. Under the shadow of the cross we get our sanity back, admitting who we are and what it is that we so desperately need. The shadow of the cross is a place of peace and protection that can be found nowhere else. Let the shadow of the cross be your teacher.

1 The shadow of the cross teaches us who we are. We all need to stop again and again and let the cross remind us of who we are, and in reminding us, to humble us anew.

2 The shadow of the cross teaches what we need. The cross powerfully reminds us that we need much more than situational, relational, financial, or physical change. The cross preaches that sin is our problem and that rescuing, forgiving, transforming, and delivering grace is the only medicine that will provide the cure we all need.

3 The shadow of the cross teaches us who God is. The cross tells us that God is unrelentingly merciful. The cross preaches God's saving zeal, his boundless love, and his willingness to unleash his almighty power and unlimited sovereignty to draw rebels to himself. The cross teaches us that God doesn't look at sinners with disdain or disgust, but with generous and tender love.

4 The shadow of the cross teaches us what God offers us. The cross teaches us that God

offers us the one thing that no other person or thing can. He offers us grace of forgiveness, of welcome into relationship with him, of personal transformation, the grace of new identity and new potential, of glorious and fully secured destiny.

5 The shadow of the cross teaches us how we should live. The cross teaches us that we should live humbly wise. The cross teaches us to be humbly ready and to start every day with cries for divine rescue and strength.

6 The shadow of the cross gives us hope. The cross teaches us to be unafraid to admit and confess sin, not because we are powerful or capable, but there is nothing that we will ever face inside or outside us that exists outside the circle of the completed victory of the cross.

Day 3 (3/7 Friday)

Read and meditate on: **Psalm 74**

****Use it as a catalyst for writing your own song of lament. Include private and corporate confession and need**

1 O God, why have you rejected us forever? Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?

2 Remember the nation you purchased long ago, the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed—Mount Zion, where you dwelt.

3 Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins, all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary.

4 Your foes roared in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs

5 They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees.

6 They smashed all the carved paneling with their axes and hatchets

7 They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name

8 They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely!" They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land.

9 We are given no signs from God; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be.

10 How long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile your name forever?

11 Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

12 But God is my King from long ago; he brings salvation on the earth.

13 It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.

14 It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.

15 It was you who opened up springs and streams; you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.

16 The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon.

17 It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter.

18 Remember how the enemy has mocked you, Lord, how foolish people have reviled your name.

19 Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.

20 Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land.

21 Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name.

22 Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools mock you all day long.

23 Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries, the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.

.....
Keep reminding yourself that you live in a world that is groaning, waiting for redemption, but remind yourself also that the cross guarantees that the groaning will someday end.

We have a reason to groan because we live in a world that is breaking under the harsh burden of the destructiveness of sin. Every day we are greeted by corporate sin, cultural sin,

institutional sin, and individual sin. Sin never has a good harvest. Sin always deceives, divides, and destroys. It always promises what it can't deliver and delivers things that were not part of the bargain. Sin masquerades as something it is not and can never be. It is ultimate wolf in sheep's clothing. It has left both humanity and the surrounding creation broken and crippled.

Our groaning is a cry for help to the only one who has the power, authority, wisdom, and grace to come to our aid and give us what we really need. And in our groaning, we confess that too often we groan for the wrong reason. Take the time to remember that the debt of your sin has been paid and the ultimate victory over what makes you groan has been guaranteed.

Day 4 (3/8 Saturday)

Read and meditate on: **Luke 9:23-25 & Romans 6:1-14**

****Prayerfully consider what you might give up during this season of Lent as a way to find your comfort in Christ.**

Luke 9:23-25

23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.

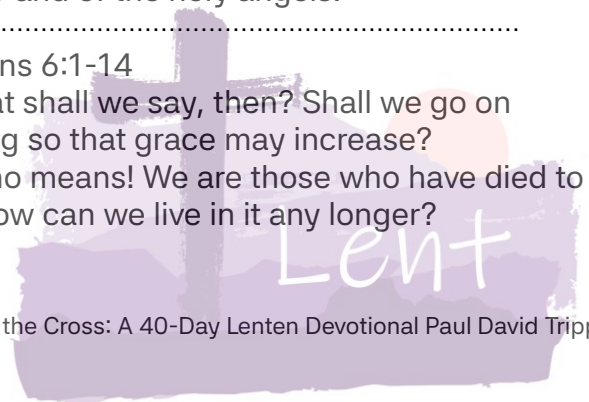
25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

26 Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

.....
Romans 6:1-14

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?



3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

.....

Lent is an important tool in the inescapable battle that rages in all our hearts between worship and service of the Creator and worship and serve of the creation. Lent call us to remember once again that sin reduces us all to idolaters somehow, someway... It gives us a season to take time and reflect on things that have taken too strong a hold on us, things that we have come to crave too strongly and love too dearly. It reminds us that often things that

we are holding tightly have actually taken an even tighter hold on us.

It is possible to think that you are a God-worshiper because he is the object of your formal religious worship, but when it comes to the day-by-day affections of your heart, something or someone else could be in control. And it's not always that we are under the control of evil things. Often good things have control over us that they should not have. So how about letting yourself suffer loss for a season? Let go of things you tend to prize. Let this season of sacrifice loosen your hands and free your heart. Let go of some of your comforts, things that have perhaps comforted you too much, so that your heart is free to seek a better Comforter. Pray that a season of going without will refocus your eyes and reposition your heart. God is good at using seasons of suffering to cause us to let go of our dependency on created things and reach out in dependency to our Creator, Savior, and Lord.

May this season's discomforts lead us to find lasting comfort in him.

Day 5 (3/9 Sunday)

Read and meditate on: **Matthew 6:9-13**

**Pray slowly through the Lord's Prayer, focusing on adoration, confession, submission, and supplication

9 "This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
10 your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Prayer is one of God's sweetest gifts to us. The command to pray is itself a sweet and loving gift from a gracious and caring heavenly Father. Prayer is where God welcomes his children to

talk with him, commune with him, abide with him. It's that holy place where the deepest of worship, the deepest of needs, and the most honest of confessions all intersect with the grandeur and glory of divine love. Prayer only works when worshipers are invited into the presence of one worthy of their worship. It only works when the one being prayed to is amazingly patient, boundless in love, constantly forgiving, and sovereign in power. Prayer is a powerful weapon in the spiritual war for your heart that wages every day of your life on this side of forever. But it is also good to give yourself to seasons of prayer. Lent could be one of those sessions where you take time to meditate, examine, and consider. Here are four categories that can organize this season of worship for you.

Adoration: Give yourself to meditate on all the reasons the Lord is worthy of your worship. As a preparation for adoring prayer, study his word again and let your heart be taken up once again with his splendor. Adoration stimulates the kind of worship that is not just a sacrifice of words, but the offer of your life to this glorious Lord.

Confession: Confession follows adoration, because the more you gaze upon God, the more you will see yourself with accuracy and the more you will mourn what you see. It takes a vision of God to have a true and reliable vision of ourselves. We are so often blinded by our own righteousness that it takes the unblemished righteousness of God to expose to us the true degree of our own unrighteousness. Prayer doesn't just include studying our Lord so that we would be overwhelmed by his glory; we also examine ourselves and the many reasons we have to confess our weaknesses, failures, and sin. And confession only works when the one receiving the confession is forgiving and has the power and willingness to rescue and restore. So come in confession, because the cross assures us of our Lord's willingness to forgive.

Submission: "Not my will, but yours, be done" is the heart of true prayer. Prayer is submitting the desires of your heart to a kingdom greater than your own. Prayer is surrendering your gifts to the glory of someone else. Prayer is so much more than asking; at the center is submitting. So, we ask for the grace to submit because, as we have already confessed, we do not have the desire, willingness, or power to do so on our own.

Supplication: Prayer is where limited, weak, and failing worshipers bring their needs before the one who is with them, in them, and for them, and who is delighted to meet those needs. Having already submitted ourselves to the mission of his kinship, we now bring before our Lord prayers that are consistent with that heart of submission. And because we have submitted ourselves to plans and purposes that are bigger than us, we don't pray just for ourselves but also for others.

****Join us for Sunday Worship**

In person: 11am and 2pm @ Ground floor Vision Hall

Online live streaming: 2pm @ Youtube

