

LENT



Introduction

Lent, popularly understood as a season of joyless custom and duty, carries almost too much religious baggage for some people. How then do we keep the gospel front and center in this season of shadows? The cross keeps our gospel focus clear. Lent is a season to journey with Jesus in his passion, to survey the cross, taking the measure of Christ's love in his suffering and death.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is the forty-day season leading up to Easter. (If you count all the days, there are more than forty, but the Sundays are not counted as part of Lent, as they are resurrection celebrations held throughout the season.) It begins with the stark reminder that "from dust you have come and to dust you will return" and leads toward Jesus' final week, marked by Palm Sunday and stopping short of the resurrection celebration of Easter morning. Ashes are a good emblem of Lent, a picture of our own mortality and spiritual condition, a sign of Lent's penitent spirit, and yet a hint of the hope of renewal.

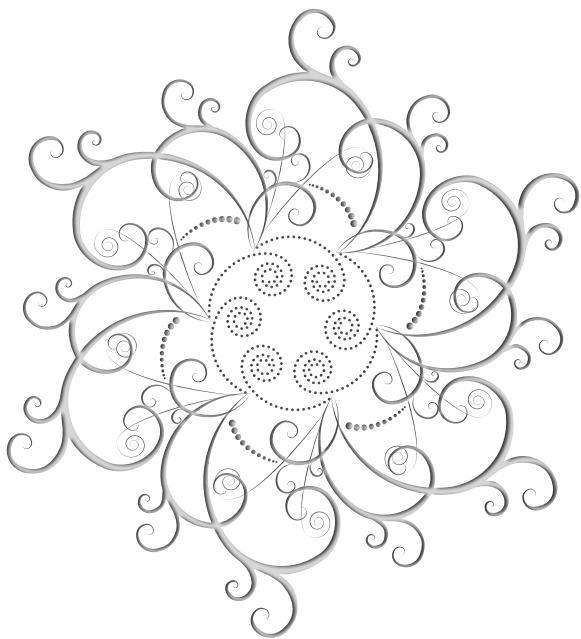
Celebration isn't the word to use for our participation in Lent. It is a somber journey of spiritual preparation and renewal, marked especially by repentance and prayer. In our pain-averse culture, Lent stands apart by not shrinking away from suffering but cultivating in us the wisdom that growth often (some might say only) comes through suffering. In a time and place of religious freedom, where we mostly don't suffer for following Christ, Lent invites us to willingly identify with Christ's suffering through fasting or other forms of self-denial.

The spare and sober nature of Lent is healthy for the heart and true to the gospel, scrubbing away frothy spirituality by calling us to say no to ourselves in order to experience a greater yes in Jesus. It helps to imprint the form of the cross in our lives, recognizing that the news of the risen Lord Jesus is not good without the way of the cross. Lent prepares us to experience the reality of resurrection joy

only by first recognizing the depth of our sin that pinned Christ to the cross.

During Lent, we'll be praying through the psalms of the Passion. This collection of psalms (Ps. 22-30) is widely regarded in the Christian tradition as referring to Jesus' passion. The first of these, Psalm 22, will be kept for Holy Week prayers, while the rest are arranged in a seven-day cycle that we'll repeat each week during Lent.

Lent has a fixed number of days, but since Easter is a moveable feast, Lent begins at variable times on the calendar.



3/9/2011
2/22/2012
2/13/2013
3/5/2014
2/18/2015
2/10/2016
3/1/2017
2/14/2018
3/6/2019
2/26/2020
2/17/2021
3/2/2022
2/22/2023
2/14/2024
3/5/2025
2/18/2026

Ash Wednesday

LENT—DAY 1



INVITATION

*“The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.” (Ps. 145:8)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 51:1-6

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
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.
Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

BIBLE READING: JOEL 2:1-2, 12-13

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy hill.
Let all who live in the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming.
It is close at hand—
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness.
Like dawn spreading across the mountains

a large and mighty army comes,
such as never was of old
nor ever will be in ages to come. . . .
“Even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”
Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for our national and local communities
- ❖ for the continent of Africa
- ❖ for lobbyists and advocates for justice and peace

PRAYER

Holy God, corruption is everywhere. For too long sin and disobedience has been our master, ever since the fall of Adam and Eve. And still today, I look around and see this sin that poisons our life. We're all natural born sinners, corrupt from conception on. And I stand as another generation of such born sinners. Lord, have mercy. Amen. (HC 7)

BLESSING

Redeem us from all wickedness, purify us and make us your very own, eager to do what is good. (see Titus 2:14)

3/10/2011

2/23/2012

2/14/2013

3/6/2014

2/19/2015

2/11/2016

3/2/2017

2/15/2018

3/7/2019

2/27/2020

2/18/2021

3/3/2022

2/23/2023

2/15/2024

3/6/2025

2/19/2026

LENT—DAY 2



INVITATION

*“The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.” (Ps. 145:8)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 51:7-13

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

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.

BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 58:5-7

“Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?”

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for spiritual renewal in this season of Lent
- ❖ for deep heart repentance
- ❖ for a genuine humility born of the gospel

PRAYER

Living God, I confess I have crossed your commandments of life; by my sin I've willingly separated myself from you, my true life. I'm damaged goods. My guilt hangs like dead weight in my heart; I can feel the sentence of death, in my body and soul. There is no health in me. Lord, have mercy. Amen. (BC 14)

BLESSING

Redeem us from all wickedness, purify us and make us your very own, eager to do what is good. (see Titus 2:14)

3/11/2011
2/24/2012
2/15/2013
3/7/2014
2/20/2015
2/12/2016
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2/16/2018
3/8/2019
2/28/2020
2/19/2021
3/4/2022
2/24/2023
2/16/2024
3/7/2025
2/20/2026

LENT—DAY 3



INVITATION

*“The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.” (Ps. 145:8)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 51:14-19

Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

BIBLE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B-6:2

We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says,

“In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you.”

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for deep understanding and gratitude for the cross of Jesus Christ
- ❖ for those living in poverty and suffering injustice
- ❖ for those who are homeless, and those who care for them

PRAYER

Freeing God, help me to face the hard truth about myself, that I am a prisoner to sin. Not only can I do no good without you, I can't even drum up a desire for you unless you first give it to me. Free me from the cramped cell of my sin and reconcile me to yourself through him who had no sin, Jesus my Savior. Amen. (BC 14)

BLESSING

Redeem us from all wickedness, purify us and make us your very own, eager to do what is good. (see Titus 2:14)

3/12/2011
2/25/2012
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2/25/2023
2/17/2024
3/8/2025
2/21/2026

LENT—DAY 4



INVITATION

*“The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.” (Ps. 145:8)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 6:16-21

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to

others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Quiet

DWELLING

Remind yourself you are in God's presence and read again...notice how God might be speaking to you through his Word—dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you...let your heart respond to God in prayer...take refreshment in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the flourishing of Christ's church everywhere
- ❖ for worship that glorifies God and gathers, unites, and blesses his people
- ❖ for elders and other leaders

PRAYER

Creator God, I praise you for creating humanity good, in your own image. Despite the regularity of evil wickedness I see in the world, despite my own twisted ways, this is not the way it is supposed to be. I'm meant to know you, to love you with all my heart, and to live with you in eternal happiness. Today, equip me to move in the direction of your created purposes for me. In Christ's name, amen. (HC 6)

BLESSING

Redeem us from all wickedness, purify us and make us your very own, eager to do what is good. (see Titus 2:14)

3/13/2011
2/26/2012
2/17/2013
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2/22/2015
2/14/2016
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2/18/2018
3/10/2019
3/1/2020
2/21/2021
3/6/2022
2/26/2023
2/18/2024
3/9/2025
2/22/2026

First Sunday in Lent



INVITATION

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Ps. 34:18)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 30:1-5

I will exalt you, LORD,

for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.

You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.

Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.

For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

BIBLE READING: GENESIS 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again slowly...find a word or phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart...slowly repeat it...pray your thoughts, desires, needs, and feelings from your meditation...enjoy the presence of your Lord and Savior.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for fellowship with the crucified and risen Jesus
- ❖ for spiritual renewal and refreshment

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER

God of grace, I can't go very long without sin showing up somewhere again in my life. It's tiring to think that I carry this sin around with me, in me. It's a family curse that I've inherited, like a genetic deficiency that plagues my life and infects my living. Lord, be my help and my health. Amen. (BC 15)

BLESSING

"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

3/14/2011

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3/6/2017

2/19/2018

3/11/2019

3/2/2020

2/22/2021

3/7/2022

2/27/2023

2/19/2024

3/10/2025

2/23/2026

LENT—DAY 5



INVITATION

*“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves
those who are crushed in spirit.” (Ps. 34:18)*

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 24

The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;

for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

Those who have clean hands and a pure heart,
who do not put their trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.

They will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God their Savior.

Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 1:5-10

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Quiet

DWELLING

Leisurely read again...is there a word or idea that stirred within you? Linger over it and give it your attention...is there something about the reading you'd like to ask God about? Pray your life to God...take a moment to rest in God's presence.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the wonder of creation
- ❖ for the care of a broken creation
- ❖ for our capacity to see God in all things, every creature a word or book from God

PRAYER

Bright God, shine your light into my darkness; although I'm home, the lights are out. I'm scared in the dark, and yet I avoid your demanding light—who knows what it might reveal in me? Who knows what you might ask me to change? And so I choose darkness over your light. Only the light of your love can change me. Jesus, shine in me. Amen. (BC 14)

BLESSING

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)

3/15/2011

2/28/2012

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3/3/2020

2/23/2021

3/8/2022

2/28/2023

2/20/2024

3/11/2025

2/24/2026

LENT—DAY 6



INVITATION

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Ps. 34:18)

Quiet

BIBLE SONG: PSALM 25:1-7

In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust.

I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.

Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you, LORD, are good.

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'People do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Quiet

DWELLING

Read again, perhaps out loud...how has God's Word moved you? Ponder and meditate what has connected with your heart or mind...pray to God what it is that has moved you today...turn your thoughts to God and quietly enjoy being with him.

FREE PRAYER

- ❖ for the call to follow Christ in your home, neighborhood, and workplace
- ❖ for our capacity to serve the common good
- ❖ for those who work in medicine; health professionals

PRAYER

Suffering Savior, thank you for the confidence I have to come to you when I stumble in sin. You're not shocked by my sin, and you don't turn away from me because of my weakness. You know the lure of sin because you were tempted in all things, so you can help me in my struggle against sin. I turn to you, compassionate Savior: help me today. Amen. (BC 26)

BLESSING

"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)