

Ash Wednesday
Peggy Hinds



Isaiah 58:6-9

“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?

⁷ 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?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn,

and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness will go before you,

and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;

you will cry for help, and God will say: Here am I.

Yesterday was Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. It is a time when we are reminded of our frailty and total reliance on God.

It is customary during Lent to give up something or to take something on. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God reminds the people of Israel that it is not enough to fast. What we do with our fasting time is also important – how we treat others and share what we have been given. We might be tempted to simply give up chocolate or wine or take on a daily prayer practice during Lent and go on with life as usual, but what are we doing to make the world better? What is the condition of our hearts toward God’s creation and humanity? How are we turning from those things that separate us from God’s love and turning toward right relationships (righteousness). These are the questions God puts before us during Lent.

As you consider your Lenten practice this year, pray for God to give you a sign or direction toward that which will challenge your generosity and strengthen your faith. God does not call us to repentance because we are unworthy. God calls us to repentance because we are worthy. After all, we are God’s children, beloved and cherished.

Prayer: Holy God, guide me toward the path you would have me take this season of Lent. Challenge me to reach out to others with generosity and compassion. Strengthen my faith that I may follow and love you more closely. Amen.