

# From Green to Purple

## Lent 2026

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The altar cloth changes from green to purple in a single motion, yet Lent calls for more than a liturgical wardrobe shift. It invites believers into a Spirit-led wilderness where God reroutes our plans, exposes our shadows, and renews us for Easter joy. When the color changes, will we?

The altar changes first. One week it wears green—the color of ordinary time, steady growth, familiar routines. Then it turns purple—the color of penitence, royalty, bruising, and deep desire. The shift looks small, yet it announces a claim with weight: Lent never intended to be a change of fabric alone. Lent presses for a change of people.

In a world addicted to speed and appetite, Lent interrupts. It refuses faith as weekend accessory and invites a forty-day reordering of love. Prayer slows us. Fasting retrains desire. Almsgiving loosens our grip. Repentance tells the truth. Renewal prepares the heart for Easter's joy. What follows is not a sentimental case for "giving something up." It is a theological invitation to follow Jesus into the wilderness and come out different—rerouted by God, humbled by truth, and renewed by grace.



## What Lent Is

Lent is the forty-day season of Christian preparation for Easter, marked by prayer, fasting, repentance, and almsgiving, shaped by Jesus' forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). Historically, the church has used Lent to ready catechumens for baptism and to call the baptized back to serious discipleship.

Lent is not a bargain with God. It is not salvation-by-sadness. It is a response to mercy: a season in which believers place life under Christ's lordship and invite the Spirit to prune what blocks fruit. If Lent feels unnecessary, Scripture suggests otherwise. God rarely forms people on the safest road. Again and again, the Lord does His deepest work in wilderness places—where control evaporates, appetites speak loudly, and God's voice becomes unmistakable. Jesus does not enter the wilderness as a tourist. Matthew says He is "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness" (Matt. 4:1). Mark makes it urgent: "the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). Luke frames it as fullness and testing: Jesus, "full of the Holy Ghost," fasts and confronts the adversary (Luke 4:1–2).

## Christ's wilderness reveals three truths:

First, Jesus replays Israel's story—and gets it right. Israel wandered forty years; Jesus enters forty days. Where Israel's wilderness exposed grumbling and distrust, Jesus' wilderness displays obedience, worship, and Scripture-shaped faithfulness. Lent is the church's annual reminder: our Savior is not only sympathetic; He is victorious.

Second, Jesus sanctifies the wilderness as a place of formation. We treat wilderness as interruption; Jesus reveals it can be assignment. Hunger becomes classroom. Solitude becomes altar. Testing becomes unveiling.

Third, Jesus exposes temptation's true battlefield: identity and allegiance. "If thou be the Son of God..." (Matt. 4:3, 6). The enemy aims to detach sonship from obedience, provision from dependence, and glory from the Cross. Jesus refuses shortcuts. He will not seize power without trust, bread without worship, or a crown without Calvary.

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Lent, then, is not nostalgia. It is discipleship with a map: walk with Jesus into the wilderness, and let the wilderness become holy.

## Rerouting: God's Detours Are Mercy

Rerouting as a Lenten theme names a neglected biblical pattern: God often redirects His people through detours on purpose. Not every disruption is punishment. Some disruptions are mercy—God refusing to let us arrive at destinations our character cannot survive.

Scripture is full of reroutes. Israel leaves Egypt, yet God steers them away from the shorter road “lest peradventure the people repent when they see war” (Ex. 13:17–18). The longer way protects the people and shapes them. Moses is rerouted from palace to Midian, obscurity training him for holy courage (Ex. 2–3). Joseph is rerouted through betrayal and prison into a maturity able to forgive and preserve life (Gen. 37–50). Elijah collapses after public victory, and God meets him in wilderness with bread, rest, and a still small voice (1 Kings 19). Paul is knocked from his confident path, blinded, humbled, and re-commissioned (Acts 9).

Lent teaches believers to interpret detours differently. The question shifts from “Why is this happening?” to “What is God forming here?”

“The blessed are not those who arrive but those who continue, at whatever cost, in their pilgrimage toward a more perfect righteousness.” —Rev. E. K. Bailey

A practical Lenten rerouting begins with fasting. Fasting is not dieting; it is desire-training. It says, “I will not be ruled by appetite; I will be ruled by God.” When hunger rises, we pray. When irritation surfaces, we listen. When plans change, we submit. The wilderness becomes a tutor rather than a thief.

## Repentance: Stumbling Toward the Light

If rerouting is God's gracious redirection, repentance is our truthful response. Wilderness reveals what routine can conceal: prayerlessness disguised as busyness, impatience excused as leadership, bitterness masked as discernment, stinginess framed as prudence, lust hidden behind screens, pride dressed in competence.

Repentance is not self-hatred. Repentance is agreement with God—naming sin as sin, refusing excuses, receiving mercy, and walking forward differently.

“Repentance is more than just feeling sorry for what you did; it is a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. It is turning your back on the shadows to face the Light of the World.” —A. Louis Patterson Jr.

Scripture gives repentance a face. David prays for internal renovation, not image management (Ps. 51). Nineveh fasts, humbles itself, and turns from violence (Jonah 3). Peter's proud vows collapse, yet Christ restores him with love and commission (Luke 22; John 21). The prodigal son stops rehearsing excuses and starts walking home (Luke 15).

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Lent invites the same honesty. Confession becomes courage. Scripture becomes mirror. Prayer becomes surrender. And fasting becomes a kind of truth-telling: cravings reveal what rules us. We do not fast to impress God; we fast to expose the small gods we have been obeying.

## Renewal: Who the Wilderness Makes Us

Renewal is not reinvention; it is resurrection-shaped formation. God does not lead us into the wilderness to abandon us. “God uses the wilderness not to destroy you, but to develop you. Lent is a season to remember our hunger for the world must be replaced by a hunger for the Word.” —A. Louis Patterson Jr. Renewal looks like dependence. Israel learns daily bread through manna. Elijah learns strength through sleep and simple meals. Disciples learn courage after the Cross. In Lent, renewal means appetite redirected, worship restored, generosity normalized, hope anchored in Christ rather than circumstances.

### Four increases mark a faithful Lent:

- Prayer deepens—from speaking at God to abiding with God. Let every hunger become a bell calling you to pray.
- Hope matures—from circumstance-based optimism to Cross-anchored trust. Read the Passion narratives slowly and let Easter’s promise stiffen your spine.
- Charity expands—from leftover giving to costly generosity. Almsgiving is love made visible; it breaks the spell of self-absorption.
- Dependence grows—from self-sufficiency to daily-bread faith. “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matt. 4:4).

## Purple, Then Resurrection

When the altar turns purple, the church is not decorating; she is summoning. Lent is a pilgrimage, not a parade—no confetti, no shortcuts, no applause. Pilgrims travel light, because wilderness miles expose what cannot be carried. Pilgrims keep going, because blessedness belongs to those who continue. Pilgrims let the road preach to them until appetite yields to obedience and self-yields to God.

So let Lent be more than a change of colors. Let it be a change of course: **rerouting**—trusting God’s detours; **repentance**—turning from shadows toward the Light; **renewal**—becoming, by grace, who the wilderness was meant to form. And when Easter arrives, may resurrection joy find a people prepared—not because we performed religion for forty days, but because we walked with Jesus through the wilderness and learned again how to live. As the altar shifts from **green** to **purple** to **white**, let our souls shift with it—out of routine growth into deep repentance, and into radiant consecration. Let purple be surrender—hearts made holy until our lives finally match our worship and devotion runs deeper than décor. **Lent is where the dye sets**; may it stain our character with courage and mercy for a lifetime, moving us from casual faith to cleansed faith—so Easter finds us not merely draped in white cloth, but clothed in a whitened life.

## Bibliography

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## Scripture (primary source)

- **The Holy Bible, King James Version.** Key passages: Exodus 13:17–18; Psalm 51; Jonah 3; Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13; Luke 15; Luke 22; John 21; 1 Kings 19; Acts 9; Genesis 37–50.

## Historic and theological resources on Lent and spiritual practice

- **The Book of Common Prayer.** (1979). “Ash Wednesday” and “The Season of Lent” liturgies and collects.
- **Catechism of the Catholic Church.** (2nd ed.). Sections on conversion/repentance, fasting, and almsgiving (esp. discussion of penitential practices and the call to interior conversion).
- **Augustine of Hippo.** *Confessions*. For a classic account of repentance as re-ordered love and desire.
- **John Calvin.** *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. For repentance as turning of life toward God and ongoing sanctification.
- **N. T. Wright.** *Lent for Everyone* (Year A/B/C volumes). For pastoral engagement with the Gospels during Lent.
- **A. Louis Patterson Jr.** Quotation(s) as provided in prompt, used as homiletical framing for repentance and wilderness formation.
- **E. K. Bailey.** Quotation(s) as provided in prompt, used as theological framing for pilgrimage and perseverance.