

Lenten Reflection 2022

Introduction

Pilgrims, we are invited to journey through this season of Lent towards the One who calls us each by a new name. Disciples, we walk with Jesus wherever he leads us, pulling our fears, our doubts, our longings behind us. Believers, we seek to trust the God who always surprises us, whose promises take on flesh and blood in the good news called Jesus. Welcome to Bedford United Church....

We Reflect... Lent is a time of deep reflection.... It is a time when we remember that our lives are held within the encircling love of God, who knows our names and recognises our deepest needs. It is a time where we are reminded of God's promise, and where we see God at play in the birthing, renewing, and enabling of the Spirit who yearns over our welfare as a wild animal yearns for a watering hole or a pond..

Scripture: Psalm 42.. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long,

“Where is your God?” Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

(Hymn 766 As the Deer)

Lent is a time for us to check ourselves. For us to bare ourselves. For us to humble ourselves and to acknowledge that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. Lent presents the opportunity to be vulnerable and to be open to God and God’s will. Knowing that without God’s grace, we are nothing.

Scripture: Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” If you say, “The Lord is my refuge,” and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. “Because he[b] loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

(Bob Solo, On Eagle’s Wings)

Lent is a time where we do the big return... A return to our faith, a return to our God. On our journey back to God we are reminded of our journey’s purpose and we bring a heightened awareness of our destination. We do not journey aimlessly, even as we journey in the wildernesses of our lives. Our path becomes clearer with each length of the journey and that path leads to a victory we cannot yet imagine. And as we journey we encounter fellow pilgrims on the road, so we are called to journey together.... We are called to return together... we are called to be one as we seek

Scripture: Romans 10: 5-13 Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” [d] that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

(Hymn 117 Jesus Christ Is Waiting)

Lent is a time when we think of how the things of this world which tempt us away from God and God’s intentions for us for live lives of Love, Peace, Happiness and hope. It’s that time when we are most prepared to sacrifice the things which distract us from God. It’s a time when we abstain from things so that we may focus a little bit more on God and our relationship with God. How may you focus more on God this year, what are you prepared to give up?

Scripture: Luke 4: 1-13: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. (Song: Farther Along)

Prayers:

Loving Lord, at the beginning of this Lenten season, we are met with the challenge of handing over every bit of our lives that do not come from You. To rid ourselves of what clutters our lives, and all that distracts us from the simple truth of Your love for us.

Your prophets have called us to change the way we worship—to make internal sacrifices instead of external ones. To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with You each and every one of our days. If we don’t give anything up for Lent, then let us at least give up this: that we might live cease living in ways that disconnect us from You, for every one of our steps is like a circle around Your temple. Perhaps this Lent, we can give up our way and give ourselves to Your way for us.

We pray for our shutins... We pray for those in our hearts...

So, lead and guide us on this Lenten way. May we walk with Jesus toward the hill just outside of Jerusalem. May we like Him take up our cross and follow, spending each moment of our lives living responsively to You, just as Christ Himself did. For that is the faithful way. We pray this in Jesus name..