

Journey in the Desert



Week Four
Confrontation - Honestly
Facing your Demons

As you begin this season of Lent, reflect on this passage.

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you (that) from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.

Luke 22: 14-20

Our Lord offers us his whole life. Yet, so often we focus on ourselves and what we can give God or do for God. Have you ever considered what God wants to give you? God wants to bless us with his grace. During this season of Lent, ask yourself this question - what does God want to give me this Lenten season?

Third Week of Lent

Daily prayer: Each morning as you begin your day, light a candle and say the following prayer:

Father of peace, we know that you are always seeking us out. Draw us closer to you in this season of mercy and reconciliation. Fill our hearts with your compassion so that we may imitate your son, Jesus Christ. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ.

Is there a person or situation that you will encounter today that is in need of your mercy and compassion? How will you show mercy or be compassionate? (Use the space below to write down brief notes each day.)

Daily meditation: Following is the Gospel for the fourth Sunday of Lent. Read this scripture passage each morning, then reflect on the daily questions that follow.

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them Jesus addressed this parable: "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' - Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Sunday—The Pharisees and the scribes complained because Jesus welcomed and ate with sinners. Are there people in your life whom you will not associate with because of what people may think? What would happen if you would associate with them?

Monday—The younger son squandered everything that he had. We have received an abundant inheritance from our heavenly Father. What keeps you from taking everything God has given you and living as if God did not exist?

Tuesday—What do you think would have been the reaction if it was the older brother who was the first to greet the younger son? If this younger son was your brother, what would you have done?

Wednesday—How do you experience God's mercy? How do you celebrate God's mercy?

Thursday—How do you feel when you realize that it's possible that those who have not lived a Christian life could inherit the kingdom? Do they deserve it? How do you reconcile this with them?

Friday—How in your life do you experience unconditional love? Do you ever put conditions on your love for the people in your life?

Saturday—Is there any person or any situation in your life that that you have not yet been able to forgive? What's holding you back? What would happen if you did forgive?

Weekly Exercise

An important component of our spiritual growth is self-knowledge. It often takes courage and brutal honesty as we confront whatever may be impeding our spiritual growth. Ponder these scripture passages and reflect on the questions that follow.

- When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him. (Luke 5:8-9)
- Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, insincerity, envy, and all slander; like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk so that through it you may grow into salvation, for you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:1-2)
- For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. (Romans 12:3)
- Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you considers himself wise in this age, let him become a fool so as to become wise. (1 Corinthians 3:18)
- Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless, of course, you fail the test. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

If there was one thing you could change about yourself, what would it be?

What one situation would you avoid at all costs? Why?

What do you fear most in your life?

What do you think it would take for you to become the person God wants you to become?

Journey Check Point

We are two weeks into Lent now. Let's do a quick check up on the three main components of our Lenten journey. What are you doing differently now than you did a week ago? Make some brief notes in each of the areas below. Look back at your workbook from week one if you need more suggestions.

Prayer—

Fasting—

Almsgiving—

If you chose to adopt a virtue, reflect more on that virtue this week. Why do you think God is pleased when this virtuous behavior occurs? How does this virtue glorify God?

Again this week make note of the situations where you were successful in your new virtuous behavior.

Also look at times this past week when you were not successful. Take a minute to go over these situations. Replay them in your mind, write down what you think you should have done differently to be more virtuous.

If you are working at losing a vice, make note of the times you were able to overcome this vice this past week.

Imagine that a young person who is close to you is just beginning to take up this vice. What would you tell them? Write down a few thoughts of what you would share with them. (Use additional paper if needed.)

Take a few minutes before attending Mass this weekend to read over the words to this song which we will be singing as our closing song.

The Master Came to Bring Good News

The Master came to bring good news, the news of love and freedom, to heal the sick and seek the poor, to build the peaceful kingdom. Father, forgive us! Through Jesus hear us! As we forgive one another!

The law's fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the man who lived for others, the law of Christ is: serve in love, our sisters and our brothers. Father, forgive us! Through Jesus hear us! As we forgive one another!

To seek the sinners Jesus came, to live among the friendless, to show them love that they might share the kingdom that is endless. Father, forgive us! Through Jesus hear us! As we forgive one another!

Forgive us, Lord, as we forgive and seek to help each other. Forgive us, Lord, and we shall live to pray and work together. Father, forgive us! Through Jesus hear us! As we forgive one another!

According to the song—what is the law of Christ?

List five specific ways you can live out this law this week.

And finally...

Look at your workbook from week one again, what notes did you make about what a “good Lent” looks like? What things have you done this past week that have moved you towards the experience of a good Lent?