

Lent, 2017

The Meaning of Lent

The Season of Lent originated in the early centuries of church history as a time of preparation for Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts until Holy Saturday, the Saturday before Easter. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week, which includes both Maundy Thursday (commemorating the institution of the Lord's Supper) and Good Friday (commemorating the crucifixion of our Lord).

Reminiscent of Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness, the Lenten season, not counting Sundays, lasts forty days. Sundays are not included because the Lord's Day, according to church tradition, is never a fast day but always a *feast* day, a celebration of the resurrection.

Lent is traditionally observed by penitence, sacrificial giving, self-denial, and prayer. We humble ourselves before God, coming before him in dust and ashes, confessing our sin and total inadequacy, stripping ourselves bare of all pretense. We place our needs, fears, failures, hopes and lives into the hands of God. We confess that our only hope is in Christ, who lived, died, and rose on our behalf.

A Daily Lenten Prayer

While there is no single way to observe Lent, you may find the following format for daily prayer and Scripture readings a helpful guide. It can be followed with family, friends, small groups, or in solitude. May God renew our repentance and faith this Lenten season!

Opening - Consider who Christ is and who you are. The words of this simple, ancient prayer are a good starting place: "*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*"

Confession - Meditate on the week's psalm of lament and confession. Respond to the psalm with your own prayer of lament and confession. You may want to use this Prayer of Confession as a guide.

"Most holy and merciful Father: I confess to you that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what I have done, and by what I have left undone.

I have not loved you with my whole heart, and mind, and strength. I have not loved my neighbors as myself. I have not forgiven others as I have been forgiven.

I have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served me. I have not been true to the mind of Christ. I have grieved your Holy Spirit.

I confess to you, Lord, all our unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of my life,

My self-indulgent appetites and ways, and my exploitation of other people,

My anger and frustration, and my envy of those more fortunate than me,

My intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and my dishonesty in daily life and work,

My negligence in prayer and worship, and my failure to commend the faith that is in us,

Accept my repentance, Lord, for the wrongs I have done: for my blindness to human need and suffering, and my indifference to injustice and cruelty,

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward my neighbors, and for my prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from me,

For my waste and pollution of your creation, and my lack of concern for those who come after me.

Restore me, good Lord, and let your anger depart from me;

Favorably hear me, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in me the work of your salvation,

That I may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

*Bring me with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.
 Almighty God, have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 strengthen me in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep me in eternal life.
 Amen."*

Meditation - Read and reflect on the day's Scripture Lesson. These lessons are drawn from Genesis to Revelation and survey the history of God's redemptive work in the world. Take time to reflect on how Christ invites us into God's great redemptive plan.

Closing - Seek the presence of Christ in prayer. The following verses remind us who He is.

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1.29)

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53.4)

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15.22)

"Since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10.21-22)

Scripture Readings

	Weekly Psalm of Lament	Daily Scripture Lesson
Ash Wed, Mar 1		Gen 1:1-2:3
Thu, Mar 2	Psalm 123	Gen 3:1-24
Fri, Mar 3		Gen 12:1-9
Sat, Mar 4		Gen 15:1-6
Sun, Mar 5		Romans 5:1-11
Mon, Mar 6		Gen 22:1-19
Tue, Mar 7		Gen 50:15-21
Wed, Mar 8	Psalm 142	Exod 3:1-12
Thu, Mar 9		Exod 15:1-18
Fri, Mar 10		Exod 20:1-21
Sat, Mar 11		Exod 40:34-38
Sun, Mar 12		Romans 5:12-19
Mon, Mar 13		Deut 9:4-12
Tue, Mar 14		Deut 18:15-22
Wed, Mar 15	Psalm 38	Josh 1:1-9
Thu, Mar 16		Judg 2:16-23
Fri, Mar 17		1 Sam 16:1-8
Sat, Mar 18		2 Sam 7:1-17
Sun, Mar 19		Romans 6:1-11
Mon, Mar 20		2 Chr 6:12-21

Tue, Mar 21		2 Chr 36:15-23
Wed, Mar 22	Psalm 90	Isa 1:1-11
Thu, Mar 23		Isa 40:1-8
Fri, Mar 24		Isa 52:13-53:12
Sat, Mar 25		Jer 31:31-40
Sun, Mar 26		Romans 8:18-30
Mon, Mar 27		Joel 2:12-17
Tue, Mar 28		Mic 6:6-8
Wed, Mar 29	Psalm 25	Matt 1:1-25
Thu, Mar 30		Matt 3:1-17
Fri, Mar 31		Matt 4:1-11
Sat, Apr 1		Matt 5:1-20
Sun, Apr 3		Romans 8:31-38
Mon, Apr 3		Matt 16:13-28
Tue, Apr 4		2 Cor 12:1-10
Wed, Apr 5	Psalm 51	Phil 3:1-11
Thu, Apr 6		Col 1:15-23
Fri, Apr 7		Heb 10:1-18
Sat, Apr 8		Rev 21:1-14
Palm Sunday, Apr 9		Matt 21:1-11
Mon, Apr 10		Matt 22:23-46
Tue, Apr 11		Matt 24:1-14
Wed, Apr 12	Psalm 22	Matt 25:1-13
Maundy Thur, Apr 13		Matt 26:14-29
Good Friday, Apr 14		Matt 27:32-56
Holy Sat, Apr 15		Matt 27:62-66
Easter Sun, Apr 16		Matt 28:1-20