

7TH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

40 DAYS

OF *Renewal* AT THE *Well*

LENTEN GUIDE



First Sunday in Lent
Rev. Dr. Herbert L Jenkins Sr.
Servant Pastor of St Luke AME Hollywood
South Carolina Conference
Edisto District
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

February 18, 2018

In these scriptures found in Matthew, Jesus teaches us that our faith can be expressed disingenuously; specifically, when giving to those in need, when fasting, and when praying. Christ presents us with the concept of hypocritical faith and works: doing good deeds **to** the benefit of others, but **for** the glorification of self. He describes these self-righteous believers as ‘hypocrites’; a word used to define Greek actors who specifically wore masks during performances; in short, those who act one way but are, essentially, playing a role to hide their true appearance. Pharisees were well known for helping those in need for the sake of popularity with the people. As well, their loud prayers and obvious fasts were done in order to gain the attention of those around them. They were doing the right things for the wrong reasons.

This Lenten season, we must challenge the motives behind our actions, words, and thoughts. It is necessary for all believers in Christ to question why we do what we do for self and others. Christ calls and compels us to consider the benefit of helping others without the accolades and the praise, praying for ourselves and others without the audience, and fasting without the hopes of being noticed. Those things we do in secret for God are still blessings added to the work of the Kingdom for the RIGHT reason: the glorification of Christ. This Lenten season, I challenge you to consider the reasons behind your good works and make sure that those things you do only derive from your genuine love for Christ and humankind.

Questions for Reflection:

1. In what ways are you challenging the motives behind your actions?
2. How can our lifestyles best glorify God?
3. What does it mean to be genuine?

Resources for the First Sunday in Lent

Call To Worship

Leader: Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you.

People: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and God will exalt you.

Leader: O Lord, help us through our worship to draw closer to you.

People: Help us to be humble and to seek your way.

Prayer

Open our hearts and our spirits to hear your healing words of peace and love, O God. Help us be the people of service and justice that you have called us to be. Make us ready to heal rather than harm; to serve rather than sever. Give us hearts of joy and justice, for we offer this prayer in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Amen

Hymns

Give Me A Clean Heart

Lead Me, Guide Me

Lord, Make Me More Holy

I Surrender All

Benediction

You have received blessing upon blessing from the Lord. Now go into the world offering hope and peace to all people you meet. Be involved in justice and healing ministries in the name of the Lord. Go in peace, AMEN.

Second Sunday in Lent

“It Takes A Sacrifice”

Reverend Adam L. China
Pastor, Adams Northeast AME Church
Columbia Annual Conference
Mark 8:31-38

February 25, 2018

So often we hear sermons and messages about what one receives when following Christ. I am a firm believer that we should preach and teach that following Jesus gains us Salvation, and many other benefits of believing in the Son of God. At the same time, we should also be upfront in sharing the fact that being a disciple of Christ will also require us sacrificing some things as well. Yes, it's true that we should give up sin, but along with giving up sin we must also give up our own selfish desires, in order to fulfill the desires Christ has for us. Jesus was clear with His disciples: following Him meant denying themselves. If we are to follow Christ, we must also be willing to give up some of our desires, and allow God's will for our lives to take precedent. Jesus taught His disciples that gaining the world isn't worth losing your soul. The world cannot save you, but Jesus can. Therefore, even if we sacrifice our desires in order to follow Him, we still come out winners. The World is Not Enough.

Prayer

O God, give us a willing spirit to follow you no matter what it may cost us here on Earth. Remind us that the reward You have in store for us is greater than anything the world may give us now. Encourage us to trust in you, and to recognize that no sacrifice goes unnoticed by you. We thank you for demonstrating to us what sacrifice is, by giving the world all Yourself in the form of Your Son. There is nothing we can give up in this life that would compare to what you sacrificed for us. We thank you for not only telling us to sacrifice, but for showing us how to sacrifice. In Jesus' name, Amen

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What have you given up in order to follow Jesus?
- 2 How has that sacrifice affected your life?
- 3 What more would you be willing to sacrifice in order to serve Christ?

Resources for the Second Sunday in Lent

Call To Worship

L: Our lives are in the care of God.

P: God has given us abundance and hope.

L: This day we have come to praise and thank God for all that God has done for us.

P: We gather to celebrate God's love and to offer our lives in service.

L: Come, let us open our hearts to the Lord!

P: Let us rejoice in God's goodness and love. AMEN.

Prayer

Father,

Your Son offered his body up as a sacrifice in my place. The least I can do is offer this body back to you. I've given you my heart; it is your home. It is no longer heavy, cynical, critical, and lacking in empathy. You are remodeling it to suit your taste for servanthood, beauty, and glory. I've given you my mind. You are transforming it to a place where joy grows. It used to be a place of darkness, hopelessness, and depression. How grateful I am! You are changing my will and aligning it with yours. It used to be centered on *me*, now it is growing in You-centeredness and other-centeredness.

And Lord, as your word directs, I offer up this body to you. Thank you that you receive living sacrifices – that I can give you my body yet stay on this planet enjoying the beauty, the relationships, and the work you have given me to do. Keep me mindful of my sacrifice all day long as I make choices – where to walk, when to sleep, what to eat, what to drink, how to rest, rhythms and schedules – all of these I give to you today. Lead me, Lord, for you are my God.

Amen

Written By Mark Herringshaw

Hymns

Lord Prepare Me To Be A Sanctuary

Bless The Lord, Oh My Soul

Alas, And Did My Savior Bleed?

Benediction

You have been called to the highest office:
a follower of Christ,
a lover of the other,
and a seeker of truth.

Remember to sacrifice, to listen, to put yourself
in a place of weakness, because these things
empower freedom, wisdom and strength.

As you go from this place, be comforted
in knowing that all you do or want to do
or try to do has already been redeemed
by Christ's love.

Let this knowledge free your true self,
holy and beloved of God.

We pray in the name of the Father,
of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Third Sunday In Lent
“A Spiritual Cleansing”
Rev. Clinton J. McPherson
Bethel, Jacksonboro
South Carolina Conference
John 2:13-22

March 4, 2018

During this time of year people are usually getting ready for a “spring cleaning” by putting away their winter garments, preparing to tend to their yard and garden and professing to adopt a healthier lifestyle through better eating and exercise. While these improvements are great, during this transition of spring cleaning I encourage you to focus on your temple: your mind, body and soul. The Scripture highlights the need for cleansing as we see Jesus demanding that the courts of worship no longer be used as a selling market. The Jews question his authority to make such a demand and Jesus explains that if their unclean ways continue and the temple is destroyed He will raise it back up in three days. The Jews are puzzled by this and remind Jesus that it took almost 50 years to build the temple so it seems impossible that the temple could be raised in just three days. As the body of believers we understand that the Jews were referring to the physical temple but our Heavenly Father was referring to his body. During this Lent Season, let us cleanse our temple of negative thoughts, damaging habits, and destructive people so we can better focus on Jesus and the desires that He has for our lives.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father we come with thanksgiving in our hearts for all that you’ve done, what you’re doing now and for what we trust and believe that you’re going to do. We ask Father that you search our hearts, our minds and spirits and cleanse of us of anything that is not pleasing to you and anything that will keep us from being drawn closer to you. We love you Lord and we thank you. Amen

Questions for Reflection?

Who/what should I cleanse myself of?

What habits/behaviors should I cleanse myself of?

What steps can I take so that I can be drawn closer to God?

Resources for the Third Sunday in Lent

Call To Worship

L: May your love and mercy be upon us today, O Lord.

P: Cleanse and refresh us from every transgression.

L: Let your joy and gladness dawn in our spirits,

P: and the recreating power of your Spirit make us new.

L: Have mercy upon us O God,

All: and let your Spirit lead us in truth and righteousness. Amen.

Prayer:

ALMIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Hymns

There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood

Oh, The Blood of Jesus

What Can Wash Away My Sins?

Benediction

From the outset of our Christian walk,
we should remember who we are
and that we are unworthy of the name of Christian,
except for what Christ has done for us.
In cleansing us from all our impurities,
God desires to humble us and often allows us
to go through a number of trials or difficulties to that end.
All things are possible to him who believes;
still more to him who hopes;
still more to him who loves;
and most of all to him who practices all three.
— *Brother Lawrence*

Fourth Sunday In Lent

“It’s Only A Test”

Reverend Barbara A. Nelson, BA, MDiv., Pastor
Cumberland African Methodist Episcopal Church
Palmetto Annual Conference, Georgetown District
March 11, 2018

To prepare us for a “real” emergency, the television networks conduct periodic tests to ensure that protocols for alerting the public of special events or disasters are operating properly. Even though these tests are conducted frequently when that familiar loud sound is heard we listen intensely to for the words “this is a test of the emergency broadcasting system.” In life, we may experience many kinds of tests. The key to our success is being wise enough to discern when we are being tested and yield not to temptation.

In our referenced passage of Scripture, when Jesus was most vulnerable, He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, but he did not give in. Satan’s attacks focused on three areas: (1) physical needs and desires; (2) possessions and power and (3) pride too. Likewise, Satan takes full advantage of our vulnerabilities, addiction – when we are physically or emotionally drained or when he thinks our faith is weak. Do not be deceived. Just as Satan used Scripture to try to tempt Jesus, how much more will he use our circumstances to try to tempt us? Temptation is often a combination of real need that is seasoned by Satan with doubt – where is God when I need Him most? This doubt – caused by our lack of faith is the origin of our inappropriate thoughts and desires. When tempted to do wrong, chose to do right. No matter how dark things may *appear* to be – don’t be deceived by Satan, our God can handle any real emergency – this is only a test.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, increase my faith so that when the wilderness experiences come upon me, I will remain steadfast and anchored in your Word. Amen

Questions For Reflection:

1. How do you handle being tested from God?
2. Building faith to endure the test is paramount. In what ways do you build your faith daily?
3. What are the positives of being tested by God? Negatives?

Resources for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

Call To Worship

Leader: After he was baptized by John, Jesus went by himself to the wilderness where he was tempted.

**Forty days in the desert, Jesus was tempted
to become relevant, spectacular, and powerful.**

Today, we begin to journey with Jesus through the season of Lent,
which brings us to face some of our own weaknesses and temptations.

**Let us worship God and walk the journey together,
seeking the spirit as our guide and companion along the way.**

Written By: Chris Heckert

Prayer

God, you know our hearts. You have knitted our inmost being and you know our deepest desires,
fears and worries. Help us to journey during this Lenten season into a new awareness of your
presence in our lives. Save us from our own temptations, so that we may more freely follow
you.

Amen

Written By: Chris Heckert

Hymns

Yield Not To Temptation

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

I've Decided to Follow Jesus

Spirit of the Living God

I Surrender All

Benediction

May the Lord put test to our faith.

May he challenge our trust,

and may we be disturbed from our every day lives.

Whether it be in the glimpses of an angelic light

or in the face of a stranger in need,

may the Lord challenge our faith.

May we rise to the purpose God has vested in each of us;

May we answer his call and say "Your will be done, and not mine."

May our hearts know the trust of not being afraid,

and our confidence rooted in the knowledge that nothing
is impossible with God.

So go forth this week, remembering

the love of the Father,

of the Son,

and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Fifth Sunday In Lent

“Be Humble”

The Reverend Kayla Eskew

Cedar Creek AME Church

Columbia District

Mark 14:1-9

March 18, 2018

Self-promotion seems to be the order of the day. Even as followers of Christ sometimes we find ourselves motivated by the thought of elevating our standing within our place of employment and even religious organizations. As followers of “The Way” should self-promotion be our focus as well? During this Lent season instead of focusing our attention on self-promotion let's humble ourselves before the God. The scripture provides several pictures of people humbling themselves before God. Jesus, our suffering Savior, humbled himself when he came in the likeness of men. Not only did Jesus come in the likeness of men but, he was obedient to the point of death on the cross for our sins. In preparation for the cross, one special woman humbled herself before Jesus. She brought her best to the master in an alabaster box. The nard oil was poured on his head anointing him, as an outward sign of her love. This woman didn't go spreading what she did to the world. No, she humbly showed her devotion to Jesus for the grace of forgiveness found only in him, even in the face of criticism. The humility shown in this act of devotion wasn't done for self-elevation, although, as it turns out everyone did remember her humility from generation to generation.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your wonderful example of true humility seen in your life and ministry. As I journey through this Lenten Season help me to develop the fruit of humility in my daily living. I repent of acts of pride and selfish ambitions. Lord, help me to grow in grace and mature in a deeper knowledge of you. Teach me to humbly give of my best to you master from a place of never wavering love and devotion. I pray that I live in humility of spirit and meekness of mind, so that I may reap the divine benefits of Your gift of grace, which You have promised to bestow on all who humble themselves before Your holy Presence, in Jesus name I pray,
Amen

Reflective Questions:

1. Is self-promotion a large part of your daily life?
2. Do you find yourself comparing your gifts, attributes or actions to those of your peers?
3. How do you view humility? Is it a weakness or strength?
4. How does your view of humility line up with the word of God?

Resources For the Fifth Sunday In Lent

Call To Worship

Leader: When the shouts of anger and hostility pound upon our ears . . .

People: Quiet our hearts, O God, to hear your voice.

Leader: When the arrogance of the world and the carelessness of people threaten to destroy your creation . . .

People: Help us be strong in our service of hope and peace.

Leader: O God, hear our voices and our prayers.

All: Be with us as we come to you.

AMEN.

Prayer

Open our hearts and our spirits to hear your healing words of peace and love, O God. Help us be the people of service and justice that you have called us to be. Make us ready to heal rather than harm; to serve rather than sever. Give us hearts of joy and justice, for we offer this prayer in Jesus' Name. AMEN

Hymns

Amazing Grace

Just As I AM

Draw Me Nearer

Benediction

Go out into the world,
and labor to bring forth new lives
of humility, of peace and of grace.

Dream dreams, pursue visions
and speak of God's goodness and generosity
in the words of those who would hear.

And may our God who breathed life into creation be your delight.

May Christ Jesus give hope to your dreaming,
and may the Holy Spirit, your advocate and guide,
set your hearts ablaze with a passion for peace.

In the name of the Father,
of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

The Sixth Sunday In Lent: Palm Sunday

“Guess Who’s Coming To Town”

The Reverend Dr. Arthur Holmes

Allen AME Church, Edisto Island

Edisto District

Mark 11:1-11

March 25, 2018

At the beginning of this scripture, we find Jesus giving instructions on what to do, where to go, who to look for, what to look for, and what to bring back. In order for Jesus to have been successful on this Palm Sunday journey, the disciples had to follow the instructions given by Jesus. It does not say that they fully understood, but it does say that they did as they were told. In our lives, we are given directions in the secular and spiritual realm that we don’t always understand, but if we trust who is giving the instruction everything will be alright. I have received instructions, that have not always been clear, but I have also learned to trust in the Lord and He won’t lead me wrong. In my years as an educator, I have told many students, “Just trust me and follow my instructions.” Just like I expected the children to do and trust me, Jesus expects the same of His children.

Secondly, we see in the last half of this text folks were celebrating Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. He came in on the least expensive animal, but He received the royal treatment. It is not always that we will be given the best of materials to do the work that we are sent to do but just trust God. This was the “celebratory” experience before the trials and pains that Jesus would ultimately have to endure. It is strange and you will find out later that some of the same ones who cried and declared “Hosanna” on this same day will be shouting another word in a few days. His entry represented His humbleness to His Father’s will and to the completion of the plan. His entry symbolizes to us that sometimes in life we will have celebrations that will be followed by a painful experience. However, we must without a shadow of a doubt, trust God to what only God can do and that is to place us where He needs us, do what He needs us to do, and let the work be to His glory.

Questions For Reflection:

1. Are you being given a directive today and you are resistant because you are not sure of the outcome?
2. Have you ever been given a celebration and had to deal with some pain after it? How did you handle it? Who did you involve in it? Who did you blame for it?
3. What’s your next step after getting clear directions from the Lord?
4. Express your last Christian Celebratory Experience.

Resources for the Sixth Sunday in Lent

Call To Worship

One: Rejoice greatly, O people of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem!
Look, your king is coming to you.
He is righteous and victorious,
yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—
even on a donkey's colt.

All: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

One: You are our God, and we will praise You!

All: You are our God, and we will exalt You!

One: O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

All: His faithful love endures forever!

Prayer

Save us Lord!

Hosanna!

Praise the Lord!

Alleluia!

To you who triumphed over death,
we sing our praise.
Your steadfast love endures forever.
As we face your death
and recall the week of your suffering,
may we do so with a joy
that anticipates the celebration
of your resurrection;
may we do so with the confidence
to turn to you
in both life and death. Amen.

Hymns

All Glory, Laud and Honor

Holy, Holy, Holy

Come Thou Almighty King

Benediction

From Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday,
may God in his infinite mercy

grant you a journey
of renewal and hope;
a time of prayer and reflection;
And joyful anticipation
of our Lord's resurrection.
May you live and serve this week in remembrance of Christ's love.
We pray in the name of the Father,
of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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