

Ash Wednesday ~ Wednesday, March 6, 2019

“A Picture of Lent”

Luke 18:9-14; Joel 2:1-2; 12-17

The Ash Wednesday liturgy calls us to a place of _____–to see ourselves as we truly are–to reflect on our _____, actions, and _____; and to _____ to God through _____ and prayer.

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of a 40 day journey of intentional _____, as we examine our _____, minds, and lives and ready ourselves to celebrate once again the death and resurrection of Jesus.

“Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Joel 2:12-13)

Lent is all about _____ to God, who desires to be in _____ with us.

One of the realities of life is that relationships–especially close ones–rarely stay the _____. In any close relationship we’re either growing _____ together or farther apart.

This growing apart happens in our relationships all the time–and it can happen in our relationship with _____ well–especially if we don’t _____ take the time to _____ with Him.

Have you ever felt distanced from God?

We _____ how close to God we want to be–and feeling distanced or disconnected from Him is a result of our own decision

God calls us on a journey from _____ to _____. He calls us to examine our sin in light of His _____; our lives in light of His _____; and our merit in light of His _____.

A STORY OF TWO MEN

Jesus’ audience was a group of people who “_____ in themselves, were confident in their own _____, and looked down on everybody else.”

“Two men, went up to the temple to pray–a **Pharisee and a tax collector.**” (Luke 18:10)

Pharisees were part of the religious _____ of the day–they followed all of the Jewish _____ prescribed by Moses, and were considered to be the _____ to God, next to the priests.

Tax collectors, on the other hand, were considered to be _____; they _____ with the Romans, collecting taxes from their own countrymen on behalf of the Roman Emperor; and they were notorious for swindling and intimidation.

The Pharisee stood and prayed about _____.

“God, I thank you that I’m not like other people–robbers, evildoers, adulterers–or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” (Luke 18:11-12)

He did all the _____ things that one was supposed to do and then some, at least _____!

He knew his life was a _____–he knew he was _____–and so he didn’t even dare to come into the temple, but stood at the back. And when he prayed, he didn’t look up to heaven, but kept his eyes on the ground, beating his breast.

“God have mercy on me, a sinner.” (Luke 18:13)

Jesus goes on to say that the sinful tax collector was the one that was _____ by God that day, and not the religious Pharisee.

“The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.” (Isaiah 57:15)

Jesus takes the _____ of the people and flips them upside down.

“For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14)

The Pharisee was _____. He looked down on others and _____ himself. The tax collector, however, was _____; sorry was for his

sins; and had a _____ heart.

If God forgave us based on our level of _____, salvation would be completely dependent on _____.

The Pharisee didn't _____ it because even though he looked like he had his act together—he was pristine on the _____, he was still a sinner—and on the _____, he was consumed with pride, conceit, and self-righteousness.

““This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”” (Matthew 15:8-9)

The tax collector didn't deserve _____ because of the terrible life he'd lived, _____ his humility and feelings of unworthiness

When it comes to forgiveness, it's all about God's _____. When we come to Him with a _____ heart, God forgives us purely out of His love, mercy and grace—which is _____.

Because of Jesus' _____ work on the Cross, forgiveness is available to everyone who will _____ it—regardless of who they are or what they've done—regardless of how they look on the inside or the outside.

_____ was available to both the Pharisee and the tax collector. However, only the _____ received it. Why? Because, in his mercy, God forgives only those who _____ themselves—who recognise their _____ for God and their need for forgiveness—and who are willing to _____ it.

“And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.” (1 Peter 5:5)

The tax collector, then, is the _____ of Lent—a picture of what this journey from darkness to light looks like. And the Pharisee is the exact _____.

**Which one are you? How will you observe Lent this year?
Do you plan to act extra religious?**

_____ and _____ are characteristics of Lent—a time when we traditionally give things up as a symbol of our desire to repent and return to God—a time to deny ourselves certain pleasures so that we can _____ more on God and less on ourselves.

““Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.”” (Joel 2:12-13)

Fasting is an important part of the spiritual life; however, as I've said many times before, God isn't primarily concerned with _____ things.

“I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6)

“For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (Ps 51:16-17)

Lent is a time to give up the dark things in our _____:

Lent is a time for us to give up our sinful habits and _____, to stand before God—just as we are; our _____ exposed—and ask Him to forgive us—to wash our sins away, and to empower us to turn away from our past, and embrace the new _____ He offers us.

Lent is also a time to give up our feelings of _____ and shame. Just as that tax collector walked home, _____ before God, we too can walk away, knowing that we've been _____.

We don't have to feel guilty about our sins—we don't have to be _____ of who we are.

Lent is an _____ of honesty and humility—as we come before God, as we truly are. However, Lent is also an attitude of _____ and joy—knowing that our sins have been forgiven—that our slate has been wiped clean.

_____ journey that confronts us with the _____ about who we are and the _____ of our sins. Thankfully, this journey also shows us just how wonderful and deep God's _____ for us really is.

How are you going to spend the next 40 days?