



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY February 18 & BEYOND”

“God’s Directions might be Difficult”



The Bible is filled with promises from God. There is only One God, so it is important to absorb into your thinking and praying that Guidance from God that we really like, and the guidance we really don't want to follow, are not two opposing forces. In

the One God there is not a dark side and a light side. What God tells us in his promises is that he wants the BEST for us, AND he will act for the establishment of His kingdom. And, actually, to turn that around, the way God has chosen to build up his kingdom in heaven and on earth is to guide us into maturity. And the development of our maturity will most likely include God leading us into places and adventures that we really like doing, and places and adventures that really test us to our core. And, of course, in the testing is the refining, and thus strengthening. There's a song that says, “Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.” That's the idea.

We are now into the season of Lent. Lent is an ancient period of time leading into the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus. This year Easter is on Sunday, April 1. Although Lent has been shorter (as when the first priest or bishop decided to have a time of vigilant prayer probably 1900 or 2000 years ago), and though we know it's been longer (as the tradition took on a life of its own), it settled down to 40 days of praying, fasting, and instruction. The number 40 is not coincidental. It appears in many places in the story of God and his People in the Bible. The story that makes it so easy to continue a strong tradition of 40 days of fasting and praying is the period of time that Jesus spent in the wilderness following his baptism by John the baptizer.

And that brings us back to the beginning thoughts. It may be difficult enough to comprehend the death of someone for the sake of others, but especially GOD, that is, the Son of God, Jesus. So Jesus is condemned to death, and sentenced to crucifixion, and it is all in God's plan. As human beings we have been owned by sin.

Jesus is the ransom. God has bought human beings back through the death of Jesus Christ. His life, through the currency of his precious Blood, was the price to be paid. And so he did. The final act of reconciliation for us comes as we choose to repent of that into which we were bound, believe in Jesus, and follow him. His rising from the dead proved that God is greater than death, and that we now had a way into eternal life. Although still uncomfortable, even sorrowful, to realize what it would take, it is possible to comprehend debt and redemption.

At the beginning of Lent, though, as the 40 days begin, we are confronted with a Gospel reading that says that “after his baptism, the Spirit of God DROVE Jesus out into the wilderness.” Why? And here is a very incomprehensible action of God - - “to be tempted by Satan.”

For all the outpouring of love and mercy, the self-sacrifice of the suffering Servant, which can fill us with joy and completion as disciples of Christ, and all led by God, how is it that we can understand the Spirit of this same God driving Jesus into harm’s way. You know, it’s hard enough to fast for 40 days, much less have to end those days with a major battle of temptation from the devil.

I'm not going to try to explain this for you in this reflection. What I want to encourage you to do, though, is understand this is, in fact, the same, One God who has poured out his spirit at the baptism, and now driven Jesus out to be tempted by Satan. Even more so, as we consider that Jesus did not sin, and this is not a matter of enforced punishment or payment. But for us, as we have sinned, if that is the case for the sinless Jesus, which I believe it is, then we must consider that this same God, who desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that they turn from their ways and live”, may do the same blessing and “driving” in the lives of sinners he wants back.

So, with all that in mind, here is a spiritual discipline, a Lenten exercise for you over these next 40 days, think about your life and how GOD has blessed you, and make a list to keep. Then think about your life and how GOD has driven you into situations that demanded every ounce of your faith, your perseverance, your devotion to serve the Lord, as dark and difficult as they may have been, and whether you came through it successfully (as Jesus did), or you did not. Jot down God's assistance during those times. Who was there? What did you learn about yourself? How did you grow in the maturity of your faith? What “circumstances” assisted you? Or, what weaknesses did you discover? What was missing? How did you come back to an assurance of faith if you didn't “make it” through those times? Keep your notes and thoughts for another time, which then might be helpful.

Finally, just remember this: not every dark place in which we find ourselves is of

God's making! And not everything we might count as abundance and blessing is of God, either. Lent is a season to help us discern the differences, and then grow into further maturity in Christ. Always, always keep your eyes upon Jesus.

Father Rob Eaton, Interim Rector

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: The First Sunday in Lent

8:00a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn Mass (Church)

5:15p Evening Prayer, Soup, and Study (Parish Hall)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue*—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

MONDAY: 7:00p (AA) Doctors' Group (Fireside Room)

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

WEDNESDAY: Noon Stations of the Cross (Church)

FRIDAY: 6:15pm Stations of the Cross (Church)

AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

SATURDAY: 7:00pm WillanWest Celebration – Solemn High Mass Honors St. Matthias,
the Apostle