

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

The Rev. J.D. McQueen, II - All Saints' Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA

Lent is a time for quiet and reflection, and that's reflected in the gospel passages, which are chosen specifically to lead us to ask some important questions.

- ❖ Some of you have shared what it's evoked in you, questions like:
- ❖ Why are these lessons so long?
- ❖ Do we really have to read the whole thing?

Now, there *are deeper* questions to ask, but that's a good place to start.

These lessons are so long because they're intended to give us a kind of biblical course on conversion

- ❖ We're being prepared for *new life*, since that's what the Resurrection of Jesus is all about.
- ❖ That also makes Easter the primary feast for baptisms, so whether we're being baptized or renewing our baptismal vows, the liturgies and the disciplines of Lent are aimed at helping us move from death to life.

The process of conversion *has* to begin with the knowledge that our lives *have* to *change*, which is how Lent *starts*.

- ❖ On Ash Wednesday we enter into an extended examination of conscience, and this is where we're invited to ask some of those deeper questions:
 - Am I being the witness to the Kingdom of God that I ought to be?
 - What within me needs to be purified to be a better friend to Jesus and to my neighbor?
 - With whom do I need to be reconciled?

April 2, 2017

Often what we find is that those questions lead us to answers that are uncomfortable.

- ❖ And that's good – because it means that we can sense that there is *more* being *offered* to us than we're *receiving*.

We see shades of this on the second Sunday in Lent, with Nicodemus' mysterious night-time visit to Jesus.

- ❖ Jesus tells him he must be born again by water and the Spirit, and offers the promise of eternal life.
- ❖ The early Church used this lesson to introduce water, light, and life as the themes of baptism, and then explained them through the lessons on the woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus.

These lessons all state explicitly that Jesus is the Messiah, and show us how everything changes when we realize that and find new life in Him.