

Ash Wednesday, 3/1

The anointing of Jesus underscores both His identity and mission. How do those things affect your faith and repentance?

Read **Matthew 26:1-13**

Consider fasting today as an aid to your prayers. See article below.

Pray, "Almighty God, Your Son fasted for forty days in the wilderness and was tempted as we are but did not sin. Give us grace to direct our lives in obedience to Your Spirit, that as You know our weakness, so we may know Your power to save through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Come to the Ash Wednesday Service this evening at 6:30.

Bless one another saying, "Do not live by bread alone, but by the will of God. May God give the angels charge over you; may their hands bear you up and keep you from falling. Amen."

A word about Lent and Fasting

Many have misunderstood the foundation of biblical fasting and as a result have slipped into all sorts of error. Fasting does not curry favor with God. Even in our most sincere attempts at piety, we are stained with our unrighteousness. We fast out of gratitude and love, not in an attempt for merit. By giving up something that is essential for our life, we are demonstrating our dependence upon God. He is our life. Without Him we cannot survive. He is more necessary than food and drink.

Many who fast today refrain from luxuries like chocolate or television and not from necessities like food and drink. While this may be an appropriate starting place, it is not what is intended by the biblical admonitions to fast and pray. Fasting is going without food as a way of entering into the reality that we need God more than sustenance. While it may be that we need to realize our need for God is greater than for candy or entertainment, that misses the depth of our true dependency.

We also fast to identify with Christ in His suffering. We must see that Christ has not saved us for our comfort, but for His own glory. This is a much-neglected truth in the American Church today. We do not suffer for the sake of suffering, but we acknowledge that Christ has called us to a life of suffering together with Him, and we seek to enter into that gladly knowing that to be with Him in pain or trial or torture is far greater than being rich and comfortable without Him.

Let us pray for one another to enter into this season of prayer and fasting out of love for our Savior and for His glory alone.

Devotionals for the rest of the week will be available at the Ash Wednesday service or on-line at www.MainePCA.org

Thursday-Saturday



SONSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

Matthew 18:1-9

Sermon notes from 2/26/06

Rev. Douglas D. Warren

Text

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

² He called a little child and had him stand among them. ³ And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ⁶ But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

⁷ "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! ⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

I. Relationships Governed By the Gospel of Jesus

II. The Seriousness of Sin

III. The Freedom and Responsibility of Sonship

Message

Please consider the following, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you:

1. How do you rank in the kingdom of God? Why?
2. Why is humility so important?
3. How does the gospel free you to be biblically humble?

Application

Taking Gathered Worship Home—Family and Individual Devotions

This is the last full week before Lent. Our reading in the Gospel According to Matthew takes us from just after the transfiguration to Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem to the end of the last narrative section before His passion. As we look together at God's Word, let us pray together that we would not be just hearers of it, but doers as well. Let us follow Christ our King.

A Brief History of Lent

Lent is the period of days from Ash Wednesday to Easter, Ash Wednesday being the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday. It is a time of fasting and penitence in anticipation of the celebration of the resurrection. Lent began simply as a time of fasting from Friday at the ninth hour to Sunday morning, commemorating the time of Christ's death. Though not universally applied in the early centuries, this forty-hour fast was widely recognized as identifying oneself with Christ. Some practiced this fast on a weekly basis (which is where the Roman Catholic practice of refraining from meat on Fridays arose), while others only fasted once a year.

By the fourth century, the annual feast of Easter was in a further state of development, and the forty hours had become forty days during which a period of fasting was emphasized (though still not practiced universally by the church). The forty days not only commemorated the forty hours that Christ was in the tomb, but also recalled the forty-day fasts by Moses and Elijah, in addition to the forty days that Jesus was in the wilderness prior to his earthly ministry.

How Do We Observe Lent?

Christ the Redeemer Presbyterian Church observes Lent primarily as a preparation time before Easter. It is a time when we consider the depth of our sin and misery to which the good news of the Gospel is the answer. The good news will be all the more sweet as we recognize our need for a Savior. We also look forward in anticipation to the celebration of His resurrection. Because of this, we encourage people to fast during times of this season – inasmuch as they are able. This is not to be done legalistically, but in recognition of our desperate need for Christ's salvation. In addition, we have prepared family worship liturgies based on the Ten Commandments. One of the primary functions of the law is to point us to our sinful nature and our need for salvation, and so we believe that this is highly appropriate during this season.

We would like to emphasize that even during this recognition of our sinfulness and desperate need for Christ's love and forgiveness, that we do have a hope in our salvation – Christ has come and borne our sins – and so, even during this time, there is great hope.

Reminder—Worship this Sunday is at Lyseth Elementary instead of at Breakwater. There will be a congregational meeting at 9:30 followed by worship at 10:30.

Sunday, 2/26

Sunday is uniquely "the Lord's Day" as we celebrate His resurrection each week. We encourage you to use the bulk of this Sunday immersing yourself in God's Word.

Read the context for this morning's sermon: **Matthew 18:1-35.**

Discuss the sermon. What does sonship mean in the Kingdom of God?

Pray for CTR as a family. Pray that we would live as sons & daughters.

Monday, 2/27

As you go to work, school, or play, live in all things as unto the Lord. How is this living in light of Christ's return?

Read Matthew 24:1-51.

Meditate on the amazing kingdom reality of Jesus' resurrection. How does this give us confidence in His return?

Pray for Christ's resurrection power to be evident in our lives together as a community of faith.

Tuesday, 2/28

Jesus said a lot of hard things. Today we will look at two difficult passages sandwiching a tender account of His blessing children. How do they go together?

Read Matthew 25:1-46.

Meditate the King's glory.

Pray that the people of Portland would rightly see His glory and give Him praise and honor for it.

Scripture Memory for the Week

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

—Daniel 9:17-19