

2021 Readings and Hymns for the Season of Lent

February 17 - April 3, 2021

Selections from Charles Wesley's [Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures](#) (1762)

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The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday, and it lasts until the Saturday before Easter Day. The last week of Lent is called Passion Week, which includes both Maundy Thursday (the institution of the Lord's Supper) and Good Friday (the crucifixion of our Lord). Reminiscent of Jesus' fasting for forty days in the wilderness, the Lenten season lasts forty days, not counting Sundays. Lent is a time to ask God to confront our own mortality and sinfulness; to ask Him to show us our need for grace; to grow in repentance; and, to reflect on the amazing truth of the Church's participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For this year, our texts and readings are selected from Charles Wesley's *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures, Volumes I & II* (1762). Wesley was an itinerant evangelist who grew ill in his mid-50's. He had to take a leave of absence from preaching and spent time recuperating in Bristol, England in 1760–61. As he rested, Wesley read through the entire Bible and wrote a remarkable series of short poems— an average of about five per day! Unlike his earlier work on the Psalms which were paraphrases of Scripture, these short hymns have an intimately personal and devotional tone. These brief hymns are meant to complement the Scriptural witness and encourage us to approach God in Christ. This guide also includes Craig Higgins' article, "[The Meaning of Lent](#)," which is a great orientation to the purpose of this season.

May you be amazed at the grace of God as you approach our Heavenly Father in these times of reflection. May we all be conformed more and more to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Ash Wednesday, February 17 Many & More

"I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins."
Amos 5:12

Of my transgressions numberless
The measure, Lord, runs o'er,
But where iniquities increase,
Thy grace increases more:
My mighty sins to thee are known;
But mightier still is he,
Who laid his life a ransom down,
Who pleads his death for me.

Thursday, February 18

Wrath & Mercy

"In wrath remember mercy."
Habakkuk 3:2

Thine anger at what I have done,
O Father, I mournfully bear,
But look to thine innocent Son,
Whoever entreats thee to spare!
Be mindful of Jesus, and me:
Thy mercy he suffered to buy,
And what he procured on the tree,
For me he demands in the sky.

Friday, February 19

Why

"Why will you die?"
Ezekiel 18:31

A death-devoted race
If thou hast passed us by;
Excluded from thy heavenly grace,
We *must* forever die:
But not by thy decree;
(Who freely would'st forgive;)
We perish, Lord, in spite of thee,
Because we *will* not live.

Saturday, February 20

One

"That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you."
John 17:21

What is that unity?
Can we be one in thee,
As thou th' eternal Son
Art with the Father one?
Then shall we know, when once we feel
The grace incomprehensible.

First Sunday in Lent, February 21

In Christ

"You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,
righteousness and sanctification and redemption."
I Corinthians 1:30

Made by the Father's gift and grace
Our wisdom true, O Christ, appear,
Our meritorious righteousness,
From guilt and curse and wrath to clear;
Our holiness, thyself impart,
Absorb what'er is I in thine,
And stamp the image on our heart,
The nature, and the name divine.

Monday, February 22

Heal

"O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!"
Psalm 41:4

Sin is the desperate wound
Which must my death procure,
Unless the balm in Gilead found
Administers a cure:
Jesus, my Lord, my God,
Faith to be healed I have;
O let the medicine of thy blood
My soul forever save.

Tuesday, February 23 **Do Not Forget**

*"Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness."
Deuteronomy 9:7*

Thou need'st the kind command repeat,
So apt the sinner to forget
His former trespasses:
But lest I cast them still behind,
Saviour, bring all my sins to mind,
And on my heart impress.

Wednesday, February 24 **Good**

*"It is good for me that I was afflicted."
Psalm 119:71*

Of blessings infinite I read,
The foremost, that my heart hath bled
And thank thee for a moment's pain,
Whose fruit shall evermore remain;
How good for me the suffering given!
'Tis grace, 'tis holiness, 'tis heaven!

Thursday, February 25 **No More**

*"Whoever believes in him is not condemned."
John 3:18*

Lord, I believe, and stand secure,
In all I speak, or do, or feel;
My conscience finds an answer sure,
To every charge of earth, or hell:
Nigh to the judge I boldly draw:
My surety all, his anger bore,
My Lord fulfilled the fiery law,
And God the just can ask no more.

Friday, February 26 **In Every Respect**

"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" Hebrews 4:15

We have not an high priest above
Unmoved at what we suffer here:
In tenderest sympathy of love
He shares our pain, and grief, and fear,
Wounded with every wounded soul,
He bleeds the balm that makes us whole.

Saturday, February 27 **I Would Flee**

*"O that I had wings like a dove! I would flee away and be at rest."
Psalm 55:6*

Come heavenly Dove,
My soul remove
From life's severe distresses,
To that glorious rest above,
To my Lord's embraces!
Saviour, to thee
I fain would flee,
I would be always praising,
Spend a whole eternity
In worshipping, and gazing!

The Second Sunday in Lent, February 28 **Conform**

*"And count the patience of our Lord as salvation."
II Peter 3:15*

I do with all my soul believe,
Thou hast so long my manners borne,
That I thine image may retrieve,
And saved at last, to God return:
Ent'ring into thy love's design,
I now expect the grace unknown,
Saviour, conform my heart to thine,
And let thine utmost will be done.

Monday, March 1 **Storms**

*"In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
till the storms of destruction pass by."
Psalm 57:1*

The flesh against the Spirit lusts,
But, while it strives to tyrannize,
My soul in love almighty trusts,
My faithful soul on Christ relies,
'Till this intestine war is o'er,
And sin destroyed can tempt no more.

Tuesday, March 2 **Power**

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."
Romans 1:16*

Jehovah's coeternal Son
Did in our flesh appear beneath,
He laid his life a ransom down,
For every man he tasted death,
To justify us by his blood,
And bring the sprinkled world to God.

Wednesday, March 3 **Exceedingly Broad**

*"Your commandment is exceedingly broad."
Psalm 119:96*

I see th' exceeding broad command,
Which all contains in one:
Enlarge my heart to understand
The mystery unknown:
O that with all thy saints I might
By sweet experience prove
What is the length, and breadth, and height,
And depth of perfect love!

Thursday, March 4 **Spent**

*"Forsake me not when my strength is spent."
Psalm 71:9*

Thou who so long hast saved me here,
A little longer save,
'Till freed from sin, and freed from fear,
I sink into a grave;
'Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord, attend,
And O! My life of mercies crown
With a triumphant end!

Friday, March 5 **Care**

"Do you not care that we are perishing?"

Mark 4:3

Master, can thy follower be
Excluded from thy care,
Tossed on life's tempestuous sea,
And sinking in despair?
Now command the storm to rest,
Hush the wind, the sea reprove,
Spread throughout this troubled breast
A calm of faith and love.

Saturday, March 6 **Bought**

"You were bought with a price: therefore glorify God."

I Corinthians 6:20

God, who didst so dearly buy
These wretched souls of ours,
Help us thee to glorify
With all our ransomed powers:
Ours they are not, Lord, but thine;
Let the vessels of thy grace,
Body, soul, and spirit, join
In their Redeemer's praise.

Third Sunday in Lent, March 7 **Tell My Soul**

"Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation!'"

Psalms 35:3

Who can soothe the soul's distresses?
Jesus, Lord,
Thy kind word
All my sorrows eases:
By the virtue of thy passion
Make me whole,
Tell my soul
I am thy salvation!

Monday, March 8 **Came to Save**

"The Son of man came to save that which was lost."

Matthew 18:11

To save the lost he came:
The lost was all mankind:
And I through Jesu's name
Do now salvation find,
And publish it the world around
That grace doth more than sin abound.

Tuesday, March 9 **The Lion**

"The lion has roared, who will not fear?"

Amos 3:8

The lion roars, before he tears,
The Lord in wrath and mercy great
Threatens before he strikes; but spares
A sinner prostrate at his feet:
Then let us fall with conscious fear,
And when we faint beneath our load,
Our contrite hearts a voice shall hear,
"The lion is the Lamb of God!"

Wednesday, March 10 **Hunger & Thirst**

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Matthew 5:6

Me with that restless thirst inspire,
That sacred infinite desire,
And feast my hungry heart;
Less than thyself cannot suffice,
My soul for all thy fulness cries,
For all thou hast, and art.

Thursday, March 11 **Immutable**

"I work, and who can turn it back?"

Isaiah 43:13

Father, the thing impossible
At thy command shall be,
Not all the powers of earth and hell
Can frustrate thy decree:
The kingdoms of the earth shall all
Be swallowed up in one,
And universal nature fall
Before thy glorious Son.

Friday, March 12 **Fear**

"Fear God."

I Peter 2:17

My heart is hardened from thy fear,
'Till thou the stone remove,
'Till love constrain me to revere
The God of pard'ning love:
Father, declare thyself to me
Through Jesus reconciled,
Then shall I always render thee
The reverence of a child.

Saturday, March 13 **Ruthless**

"So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves."

Exodus 1:13

The world and their infernal god
Have ruled us with an iron rod,
And long our slavish souls have been
Galled by the rigorous yoke of sin:
Yet drudging on with abject fear
We served our haughty lords severe,
And hardly daring to complain,
We kissed the rod, and hugged the chain.

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 14 **See**

"We would see Jesus."

John 12:21

Fain would I my Redeemer see,
As when extended on the tree,
He groaned beneath my sinful load,
He poured out all his sacred blood:
Above, I want this only sight,
To view the Lamb by his own light,
'T admire the lustre of those scars,
Which brightens all the morning-stars!

Monday, March 15 **Vanquished**

*"Dagon was fallen upon his face before the ark."
I Samuel 5:3*

Idols may triumph for an hour,
But vanquished by almighty power
They to the living God shall bow:
And Dagon stoops to Jesus now;
And 'till an end of sin I see,
Corruption bows to grace—in me.

Tuesday, March 16 **Be Reconciled**

*"On behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."
II Corinthians 5:20*

Mystery of amazing grace!
Heaven's offended majesty
Sues to the offending race,
"Pray be reconciled to me,
Me, who all your evil know,
Me, already pacified,
Me, who lived, a Man of Woe,
Me, who for my rebels died!"

Wednesday, March 17 **Peace**

*"And the counsel of peace shall be between them both."
Zechariah 6:13*

Thee Prince and Saviour we adore
In both thine offices,
Thy priestly and thy kingly power
Conspire to seal our peace;
Thy blood hath bought, thy grace maintains
Our blessings from above,
And where thy praying Spirit reigns,
He fills a throne of love.

Thursday, March 18 **Merciful**

*"God be merciful to me a sinner."
Luke 18:13*

A mere helpless sinner I
Must without his mercy die;
But when this is all my plea,
God in Christ is love to me.

Friday, March 19 **Find**

*"Oh, that I knew where I might find him!"
Job 23:3*

Where but on yonder tree?
Or if too rich thou art,
Sink into poverty,
And find him in thine heart.

Saturday, March 20 **For Me**

*"Who loved me, and gave himself for me."
Galatians 2:20*

Holy Ghost, remove the grief
And burden of my sins,
Me, convinced of unbelief,
Of righteousness convince:
Comforter, on thee I call,
Apply the blood that sets me free,
Tell my heart, who died for all
Hath loved, and died for me

Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 21 **Behold**

*"When he beheld the brass serpent, he lived."
Numbers 21:9*

Faint my head, and sick my heart,
Wounded, bruised, in every part,
Satan's fiery sting I feel
Poisoned with the pride of hell:
But if at the point to die
Upward I direct mine eye,
Jesus lifted up I see,
Live by him, who died for me.

Monday, March 22 **Flesh & Bone**

*"We are members of his body."
Ephesians 5:30*

Flesh out of his flesh we are,
And bone out of his bone,
Who the heavenly nature share
Of God's most holy Son;
God doth now our hearts impress,
Made soft, yet firm, like his above,
Filled with all the tenderness,
And all the strength of love.

Tuesday, March 23 **Grasping**

*"In the womb he grasped his brother's heel."
Hosea 12:3*

Struggling for mastery within
Nature and grace I feel;
But grace arrests my bosom-sin,
And grasps his brother's heel:
The younger still his sway maintains,
And treads the elder down,
Till grace the heavenly birthright gains
With an immortal crown.

Wednesday, March 24 **Belong**

*"You belong to Christ."
Mark 9:41*

Jesus, I belong to thee,
Challenge thine own property,
Made, and bought by love divine,
Thine I am, and doubly thine:
Lest through me thou suffer loss,
Nail me to thy bleeding cross;
Farther to secure thine own,
Fix me on thy glorious throne.

Thursday, March 25 **The Beginning**

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
Genesis 1:1*

By faith we know, the world was made
Formless at first and void:
We know, the universe decayed
Shall be by fire destroyed:
But soon the coeternal Son
We shall in glory view,
Jehovah sitting on his throne,
Creating all things new.

Friday, March 26 **Fishers**

"I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19

Fishers of men 'tis thine to make;
O for thy truth and mercy sake
Instruct, whom thou dost call,
To cast the net on the right side,
And tell mankind that thou hast died
And purchased life for all.

Saturday, March 27 **Vomited**

"The LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land."

Jonah 2:10

Him dead and buried we confess,
The storm our sins had raised t' appease,
Three days and nights for us confined:
But lo, emerging from the grave,
He comes, a ransomed world to save,
He preaches life to all mankind!

O that we all his words might hear,
A greater far than Jonas fear,
And live and die, at his command!
Then shall the grave its prey restore,
Raised by his resurrection's power,
And cast *us* on the heavenly land.

Palm Sunday, March 28 **King**

"Behold, your king is coming to you."

Zechariah 9:9

Hosanna to the Son
Of David on his throne!
Lo! He comes, our Lord and King,
Comes to fix his kingdom here;
Let his church rejoice and sing,
Shout our great Redeemer near!

Monday, March 29 **Entered**

"Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought."

Matthew 21:12

Saviour, who dost with anger see
The lusts which steal my heart from thee,
The thieves out of thy temple chase,
And plant thy Spirit in their place,
And when my God inhabits there,
My heart shall be thine house of prayer.

Tuesday, March 30 **Kingdom**

"I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations."

Haggai 2:22

Lord of hosts, Almighty Lord
Of men and angels come,
Sweep the earth with fire and sword,
To make thy kingdom room,
Every other throne o'erthrow,
That thine only may remain,
Reign thy thousand years below,
And then forever reign.

Wednesday, March 31 **Deliver**

"Deliver me from all mine offences."

Psalms 39:9

Jesus, my Saviour and my Prince,
Answer on me thy saving name,
Deliver me from all my sins,
The guilt, the sorrow, and the shame,
And from mine inmost soul remove
The power, the nature, and the love.

Maundy Thursday, April 1 **Love**

"Having loved his own who were in the world,

he loved them to the end." *John 13:1*

Saviour, am not I thine own?
Throughout my evil days,
Surely thou on me hast shown the riches of thy grace:
Thee, the sinner's constant friend,
In life, and death I trust on thee;
Love me, Lord, when time shall end, through all eternity.

Good Friday, April 2 **Finished**

"It is finished."

John 19:30

'Tis finished! The Messiah dies,
Cut off for sins, but not his own!
Accomplished is the sacrifice,
The great redeeming work is done;
Finished the first transgression is,
And purged the guilt of actual sin,
And everlasting righteousness
Is now to all the world brought in.

'Tis finished, all my guilt and pain,
I want no sacrifice beside,
For me, for me, the Lamb is slain,
And I am more than justified;
Sin, death, and hell are now subdued,
All grace is now to sinners given,
And lo, I plead th' atoning blood,
For pardon, holiness, and heaven.

Saturday, April 3 **Grave**

"If a man dies, shall he live again?"

Job 14:14

Hide me in my Saviour's grave,
'Till thy wrath is all o'erpast;
Now appoint a time to save,
Think on me for good at last,
Brought out of thy secret place
Pure in heart to see thy face.

Easter Sunday, April 4 **Resurrection**

"He has risen, as he said."

Matthew 28:6

Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won,
Death in vain forbids His rise,
Christ hath opened paradise.

The Meaning of Lent

adapted from "On Keeping A Holy Lent"

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People from different religious backgrounds have very different reactions to the season of Lent. Some grow up in churches where Lent is observed, but with little to no real explanation. Whether observed as a time of strict austerity or merely as a time of forgoing a few simple pleasures, Lent may seem like an empty, meaningless ritual in such cases. On the other hand, some grow up in church traditions where Lent is not observed at all. These folks may think of Lenten observance as, at best, a hollow custom, or, at worst, quite foreign to authentic Christianity. As a matter of fact, many who grew up in the church have the same question as those who didn't: "What is Lent, anyway?"

What is Lent, Anyway?

Lent's origin is hidden in the early centuries of church history, but we do know that it originated as a time of preparation for Easter. From the church's earliest days, the resurrection of Christ was celebrated not only each week (on Sunday, the Lord's Day), but also in a special festival of the resurrection. This festival we call Easter Day, and it is celebrated as the Sunday of Sundays!

Lent, as a season of preparation, is traditionally focused on repentance. Speaking biblically, to repent means to make a change in our attitudes, words, and lifestyles. As 16th century reformer Martin Luther taught, the Christian life in its totality is a life of repentance. Beginning when we first trust Christ, and continuing throughout our lives, we are more and more turning away from sin and self-centeredness and more and more turning to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even though a repentant spirit should mark all we do, it is still appropriate that certain times be set aside for a particular focus on repentance.

In much the same way, we celebrate the resurrection of Christ each Sunday, but especially at Easter; and while we should always thank God for the Incarnation, we especially celebrate it at Christmas. These periodic reminders keep us from becoming forgetful and imbalanced. The church has traditionally done this at the Lenten season (and, to a lesser extent, in the pre-Christmas season of Advent). Lent, therefore, is a time for focusing on the heart, a time for asking questions about our spiritual health:

- *What are my characteristic sins, and how can I pray for change?*
- *What idols have captured my imagination so that my love for the living God has grown cold?*
- *In what ways is my devotion to Christ and His church less than wholehearted?*

The Lenten season is the spiritual equivalent of an annual physical exam; it's a time to take stock of our lives, our hearts. Keeping Lent, however, is potentially dangerous, precisely because of this focus on the heart. After all, it is much easier to read a book on prayer than to spend time leisurely speaking with our heavenly Father. It is much easier to fast from certain foods than it is to turn from idols of the heart. It is much easier to write a check than to spend time in ministries of mercy.

Consequently, Lent is easily trivialized. The point of Lent is not to give up chocolate; it's to give up sin! Even with this warning, however, we need to beware of going from one extreme to the other. Yes, it is possible to completely *externalize* your Lenten observance that you end up trivializing it. Yet we need to remember that we are not purely spiritual beings. God created humans as *physical* beings; we are psychosomatic creatures, a

"nexus of body and soul." What we do physically has an effect on us spiritually—and we neglect this principle to our peril.

For example, it is unquestionably true that our attitude in prayer is more important than our posture in prayer. However, sometimes being in a physical posture of humility—kneeling in prayer—helps us get in the right frame of mind. It shouldn't surprise us in the least that there is a connection between the physical and spiritual; it simply reflects how God created us. That's why, at the center of Christian worship, God gave us the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper— simple physical rites involving water, bread, and wine, but rites that communicate to us the most profound of spiritual realities.

That's also why, in the pages of Scripture and throughout the history of the church, we find many physical acts and postures designed to help us worship, to help us pray, to help us in our spiritual growth. The list could be quite long, such as standing for prayer and praise, the laying on of hands, anointing the sick with oil, bowing one's head and closing one's eyes for prayer. Recognizing this God-created link between the physical and the spiritual, the Lenten season has historically included a physical element, specifically fasting and other acts of self-denial. We'll deal with these more fully below.

Should We Observe Lent?

I am sometimes asked why churches should observe Lent at all. Well, I certainly agree that of all the seasons of the church year Lent is the most-often trivialized. Consequently, many churches (including some Presbyterian churches) do not observe the season. There are, however, two good reasons for keeping this tradition:

First, this is a *wise* tradition. Realizing that repentance should characterize the totality of the Christian life, we should see the practical wisdom in setting aside time especially for this purpose. Just as a baseball player may work at staying in shape year round but still give special attention to conditioning before the start of spring training, so we may find great spiritual benefits in setting aside a few weeks to give special attention to the state of our souls.

Second, it is right that we *honor* the traditional wisdom of the church, and Lent is a tradition that the church has observed for centuries. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit has been present throughout church history, guiding God's people into an ever-increasing awareness of biblical truth, we believe that it is foolhardy to disregard history and constantly to try to "reinvent the wheel." We dishonor our spiritual ancestors when we casually disregard their wisdom.

Are Christians required to observe Lent? Strictly speaking, no; Presbyterians have long emphasized that our consciences are bound to Scripture alone, and there is no biblical mandate to celebrate Lent. But countless generations of Christians have found this a helpful tool.

When is Lent?

The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts until the Saturday before Easter Day. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week, which includes both Maundy Thursday (commemorating the institution of the Eucharist) and Good Friday (commemorating the crucifixion of our Lord). Reminiscent of Jesus' fasting for forty days in the wilderness, the Lenten season, not counting Sundays, lasts forty days. Sundays are not included because the Lord's Day, according to church tradition, is never a fast day but always a *feast* day—a celebration of the resurrection! Therefore, during Lent the Lord's Days are listed as Sundays *in* Lent, not Sundays *of* Lent.

How Can I Keep Lent?

Traditionally, the Lenten season is observed in four basic (and often overlapping) ways:

1.) Self-Examination

As we've discussed, this is central to the traditional Lenten observance. Use this time to ask yourself some hard questions about your spiritual life, your spiritual maturity. The following questions taken from *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*, by Jack Miller, are a great place to start:

1. *Is God working in your life?*
2. *Have you been repenting of your sin lately?*
3. *Are you building your life on Christ's free justification or are you insecure and guilt-ridden?*
4. *Have you done anything simply because you love Jesus?*
5. *Have you stopped anything simply because you love Jesus?*

If you're married, ask your spouse to give you his or her evaluation of your spiritual health. Many Christians have a Christian friend, or a small group of fellow believers, who provide an opportunity for spiritual inquiry. If you don't have these kinds of relationship, Lent might be a good time to initiate one. Parents—especially fathers—could use Lent as time to spend more time with their children individually, trying to understand their particular spiritual struggles and providing them encouragement.

With all this emphasis on self-examination, however, it is crucial to keep your focus the *Gospel*: All of us are more sinful and helpless than we would've ever dared admit, yet in Christ we are more accepted and forgiven than we would've ever dared hope. Be careful that your self-examination is centered on this Good News. There is always the danger of falling into morbid introspection, which can lead to despair over your own spiritual health and to a harsh legalism toward others.

2.) Self-Denial

The Lenten season traditionally is also a time for acts of self-discipline and self-denial, a time to remind ourselves that we do not live by bread alone. Self-denial helps us remember what is so beautifully signified in the Eucharist—that Jesus is the true bread of life, our only source of strength and sustenance.

The two major fast days of the traditional church year—Ash Wednesday and Good Friday—both occur during the Lenten season. Traditionally, the other days of Lent—except Sundays, of course—are marked by other acts of self-denial. Some common examples would be giving up one meal a day or giving up a particular food. Self-denial, however, doesn't always involve what we eat; some people may work on other habits, seeking to better use their time. (I've known some people to fast from watching too much television!) For families in this dangerously frenetic culture, Lent would certainly be an appropriate time to cut back on the seemingly-endless flow of activities and spend time worshipping, praying, and learning together.

Since fasting is so unfamiliar to many in our culture, it is wise to consult with a pastor or other spiritual leader before making any decisions in this area. (Some people, of course—such as expectant or nursing mothers, the sick, and those on special diets—should not fast.) Before you begin fasting, I would recommend that you look at what the Scriptures say about the practice (see especially Matthew 6), and perhaps get some guidance from good books on the subject. And again, remember that there is nothing magical in these spiritual disciplines; they are tools to help you grow closer to Christ.

3.) Acts of Compassion

The Lenten season is a particularly appropriate time to ask God to fill you with compassion for the poor and oppressed and to put this into practice in concrete ways. This can take many practical forms. For example, there are Christians who give up one meal a day as a Lenten discipline, and then give the money they've saved by doing so to the poor. Many churches—including West End Presbyterian Church—have Maundy Thursday and Good Friday offerings for ministries of mercy, so money saved during Lent could be given at that time. There are many ways in which families can practice compassion during Lent. In your neighborhood, there may be a poor family you could help (with or without drawing attention to yourselves). Or maybe you know an older person who lives alone who could use some help around the house—or would simply like having a friend. Some families save their loose change or forgo some simple expenditures, then give the money to the poor. Lent can be an excellent opportunity to teach our children the value of compassion.

4.) Using the Means of Grace

Finally, the Lenten season is a time for renewing our focus on the means of grace—a focus that all-too-easily fades when not given adequate attention. Historically, the church has said there are three means of grace—three instruments through which God helps us grow to be more and more like Christ: the Scriptures, prayer, and the sacraments. If regular times of prayer and Bible study have never been a part of your life (or if they once were but have become less so), then Lent is a wonderful opportunity to begin these life-changing practices.

The Lenten season would also be a good time to get involved in a Bible study group—a practice that generations of Christians have commended as key to their spiritual growth. And if your family doesn't have a time of worship together, Lent is a great time to start—and then keep going the rest of the year! In our individualistic culture, it is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that Christianity is a *communal* faith, that the center of Christian life is not private religious devotion but corporate worship, gathering with fellow believers to sing, pray, and receive Holy Communion. There are many today who identify themselves as Christians but for whom the church is peripheral and tangential. If this sounds like you, then use this Lenten season to commit yourself to the community of God's people. If you are a follower of Christ and yet have never been baptized, then make every effort to be baptized as soon as possible. If you have been baptized, remember that in baptism you were incorporated into a community, the family of God, and that you are to join in the family meal, the Lord's Supper. And parents, the Lenten season is a wonderful time to help your children realize that the church is their family, that worship is their first duty and greatest joy. And if your children understand the Gospel, then this season could be a wonderful time to take the steps toward having them admitted to the Lord's Table. As Lent begins this year, our prayer for you is that this would be a truly blessed season, a time of genuine and significant spiritual growth for you and for your family.

Lord God, eternal and almighty Father, we praise You for the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received forgiveness and eternal life. Grant us the grace to observe Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on your holy Word. Grant that we may remember that though we are dust, and to dust we shall return, that we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Lent and Easter 2021 Worship

West End Presbyterian Church
9008 Quioccasin Road, Richmond, VA 23229
www.wepc.org

Lenten Service of Worship and Communion 6:30pm, Ash Wednesday February 17

He remembers that we are dust.
Psalm 103:14

Lent, a tradition from the early centuries of church history, is a season of preparation preceding the celebration of Easter focused on repentance. Speaking biblically, to repent means to make a change in our attitudes, words, and lifestyles. As 16th century reformer Martin Luther taught, the Christian life in its totality is a life of repentance. Beginning when we first trust Christ, and continuing throughout our lives, we are more and more turning away from sin and self-centeredness and more and more turning to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This communion service will be an opportunity to worship God in light of the grace He gives His people to repent and trust Christ alone for our hope and salvation.

*In-person + livestream. No nursery provided; Children are welcome.
An offering will be taken for the WEPC Deacon's Fund.*

Personal Retreats

8:30am -12:30pm, Saturday March 6 (In-Person)
9am – 12:30pm, Saturday March 13 (Virtual)

Be still, and know that I am God.
Psalm 46:10

In person on March 6 at Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond. Time alone in prayer & reflection, punctuated by times of corporate prayer, Scripture reading, and some sharing of what the Lord is teaching us. Expect it to be a quiet time. Registration is \$10. Space is limited. Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org.

Information on the March 13 Virtual Retreat option will be available at wepc.org soon.

Maundy Thursday Communion Service 7:00pm, April 1

Take. Eat.
Matthew 26:26

This service commemorates the night Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, washed the disciples' feet, prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, and was betrayed, arrested, and taken away for trial. Called Maundy Thursday, (from *mandatum*, the Latin origin of "mandate") it refers to Christ's mandate to serve one another, which He demonstrated by the washing of feet. We gather to worship, to remember His work on the cross, to celebrate communion, and to respond to Christ's mandate to serve each other.

*In-person + livestream. No nursery provided; Children are welcome.
An offering will be taken for the WEPC Deacon's Fund.*

Good Friday Communion Service 7:00pm, April 2

It is finished.
John 19:30

We encourage individuals and families to use this day to pray and reflect on the significance of Christ's life, death and resurrection. This service of corporate prayer, Scripture reading, confession, and celebration of our Lord's death helps us to consider and respond to the crucifixion and atonement of Jesus Christ for us.

*In-person + livestream. No nursery provided; Children are welcome.
An offering will be taken for the WEPC Deacon's Fund.*

Easter Sunday 9:00 and 10:30am, April 4

O death, where is your victory?
I Corinthians 15:55

Jesus Christ is risen! Please join us for our regular Sunday schedule of Worship.