

## The Meaning of Lent

Scripture: Matthew 4:1 – 11

First Sunday of Lent 2024

As in natural life, certain days and seasons of the church life have special meanings and messages for us. We are now entering a phase of Easter season. We are now entering the season of Lent. The messages and meaning of Lent are really needed in our world today.

Lent is a season which has been observed throughout the ages by Christians of every land. During Lent you will hear a message about the forty days Jesus was in the wilderness and you will hear about the forty hours Jesus was under the power of death which is the period of time from noon on Good Friday until 4am on Easter Sunday.

Forty has a lot to do with Lent since Lent is forty days not including Sundays. Lent is the season of preparation for Easter, the most Holy season of the church year. Lent has a very significant place in the church. It is a season of devotion and preparation for Easter.

In the early days of the church, Lent became a period of self-discipline and training which led to their restoration of the church. Back in those days, it meant something to join a church. Admission in a church required the strictest possible discipline. Membership meant a lifetime of Christian service.

Lent is a time in which church members rededicate themselves to Christ. Lent is still a season of preparation for admission into the church and it is a time to remember the suffering and death of our Lord. Lent is a time in which all of us should seek to purify our lives and give them anew to God.

So what can the meaning of Lent mean to us in this modern time? Most of us are timid in spirit. We are fearful of the night. We are afraid of the future. We are full of anxiety and unsteadiness. We are needing a power from on high to lift us heavenward, to support us with strength and courage, and to prepare us to face these trying days with confidence. Most of us are facing a future that we are scared of!

Most of our difficulties are clear and frightening! It is normal to be frightened. It is normal to be afraid. It is normal to be filled with anxiety. But God can transform our timidity into the spirit of power, love, and discipline. In other words, God can turn our weaknesses into strengths. God can turn our fear into courage.

Let us keep our eyes focused on the climax of this Lenten season. Let us look daily at the cross and beyond the cross to the empty tomb for we will find in these events the most stupendous happenings in human history. In these events we find the hope for the future and victory over death!

We should reexamine our faulty lives against the perfect life of Christ and Lent gives us this time to reexamine this. Let us ask God to forgive us when we have failed to live up to the Life of Christ. Let us seek God's forgiveness for not doing things we should have done and doing things we should not have done. Let us lift up to God for forgiveness sins of omission and sins of commission.

Let us seek one master and one Lord. May we seek his kingdom in everything we do. May we not only proclaim this on Sunday's mornings, but may we proclaim it each and every day of our week. Not only must we be attentive towards our friends, but we must be attentive to everyone we meet in this world.

I believe faith is given to us, not just for our peace of mind, but to motivate us to live faithfully for God. Only as people discipline themselves to live faithful to God, does their faith become adequate enough to touch others.

We have enough faith no matter how little it may seem. We have enough faith to give God top priority in our planning, not to take his name in vain. Do not compromise with evil, take Christ seriously.

Lent is the time for all of this to happen if you are willing to let it happen. If we lack faithfulness, then we are like the people who put Jesus on the cross!

Here is the basic difference between Christ and every other religious leader – all the others religious leaders came into the world and died – Christ came and died but he was resurrected. No other religious leader did this but Christ!

May Lent be for us the time to reexamine ourselves and commit ourselves to serve Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

On this first Sunday of Lent, may we reexamine ourselves and find a deeper faithfulness to Jesus. May our Lenten journey lead us to the cross and to the tomb, and may we journey to that wonderful morning when the tomb was empty. AMEN.