

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

It is finally starting to feel like the season is changing. It is finally starting to warm up a little bit, the days feel longer, and those cold windy nights seem to be getting fewer and fewer as Spring starts to make its presence known.

As the seasons change outside the walls of this church, we have experienced another season change here inside God's house. Starting last Wednesday, we have begun a new season in the church, we have moved from the days of Epiphany to the 40 days of the season of Lent.

As we talked about in our children's message each Season of the church year helps us look at Jesus through a different lens. It isn't that we are worshipping a different Jesus each time the seasons change, but rather we are letting the church year help us to explore and unpack the various aspects, promises and hope we have in our Messiah, our Savior Jesus. Throughout the years of the Church, the faithful that have gone before us, have developed a yearlong calendar that walks us through the life of Christ and His church. From Advent to Pentecost we read, reflect and are shaped by different parts of Scripture and the life of Christ.

From Advent to Pentecost we take time to reflect on the person and work of Jesus and how that shapes us as disciples of Christ. Instead of focusing narrowly on one part of who Jesus is, we instead hear the depth of God's promises and His work for us. We hear how Jesus impacts all aspects of our lives and shapes us in our walk of faith.

Each different season brings to us a deeper understanding of our savior. As the seasons

of the church go by us, what we practice, what we see and hear in this place prepares us to deal with the things we encounter in the world.

Looking back on our year so far, we can see the ways that God has revealed Himself to us. In Advent we were filled with a sense of hope. A hope defined by waiting on the Lord to fulfill the promises He has made. We stood with the people of the Old Testament waiting for God to deliver to them with the promised Savior, it also shaped us to be waiting for Christ our savior to fulfill His promises to us - That one day He will come again on the clouds and save His people. After Advent we were filled with a sense of Awe at reading about the Birth of our Savior during the Season of Christmas. As we as a church contemplated Christ in the manger, the infinite God in the Flesh amongst us. It shaped our walk as Christians as we have a savior who is not distant and far off, but experienced the things of this life in the flesh and is with us. The next season of Epiphany brought to us a wonderful unveiling of what the Kingdom of God will be like and what Christ our king will rule like. We realize in our call to be disciples how different life is in the kingdom.

Now we arrive to our season of Lent. Lent seems to come out of nowhere and hit us like a firehose. Unlike other seasons in the church year, there is a lot more activity that comes in these sort 40 days of lent. We gather together for an extra mid-week service on Wednesdays to contemplate lent. We talk with our neighbors and friends and we hear and see people giving up any number of things as we walk through the season. Chocolate, soda, social media, or any other vices or pleasures throughout the 40 days. Some stop from eating red meat on Fridays. We even experience a mood shift

within our services as they take on a more somber tone. Gone are certain words from our liturgy and a focus on suffering and sin seems to permeate our time in worship.

Lent hits us like a firehose because of the swirl of activity that takes place all around it. All of these things can be good and helpful, but the intensity with which they come at us have some unhelpful side effects. During the season of Lent, we can face the temptation to naval gaze. To turn ourselves inward and instead of the focus on Christ and how He wishes to shape us this during these 40 days, we can become lost in the details. We focus on the me aspects of Lent, the things I am doing, the things I am giving up or the time I am spending. We can lose focus.

So today, on this first Sunday in Lent we are going to take a moment and reflect on what this season is all about. We are going to pause and see what Jesus is going to reveal to us about Himself these 40 days, and think about how this will shape us as we walk through this season together.

In our Epistle reading for today St. Paul tells us the story of Lent. In fact he reduces all of human history down into a short few verses. Paul takes all ages of humanity, all different people groups, all cultures and languages, he takes all the deeds and actions of the people of the world throughout time and He tells the sad story of the world through One man. He writes: Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. Paul takes us back to the very first man. Adam, the Father of all of us. We remember that Genesis story, Adam and Eve in the Garden in the perfection of God's creation. No disease, no death, God and man in perfect harmony with one another. Through the

temptation of the devil a deed was done. One single action changed the course of Human history. Man disobeyed the will of God. From one tree they were not to eat and as Paul tells us through one-man sin and death enters into our world.

In a flash everything changed. The once perfect and harmonious Garden now looks familiar to us. Where there was once perfection, now there is sin. Where perfect health once was, disease is now found. Where life was, death now reigns and the perfect relationship between God and Man destroyed. This story does not end with Adam but continues on with His children and His Children's Children. Death reigns. One Trespass of One Man lead to the condemnation for all.

We as Adam's distant children are no different. We inherit our first father's sin down through all generations. We look in the past and see the horrors and terror One man's actions have brought into the world. We see humanities capacity to hurt and harm one another, to hate one another, to treat each other with disdain and malice. Death takes all before us. Now Adam's curse comes to us the sin and evil of our forefathers grows in us.

We see our own capacity to hurt and harm others. We use our words to lash out and hurt others, we sit behind our keyboards and speak ill of one another, tearing each other down. We harm each other as we see our own personal gain in our neighbor. We strike out at each other to be the best, to make a little bit more money or to simply make ourselves feel good. We turn others into means to get what we want, gratification, Lust or a means to an end that gets us further at the expense of others. Our fate is like our forefathers, like Adam before us. Death has a hold over us. We too

will face the consequences for the sin in the world and the sin of our own doing, our own destruction and demise, our own deaths.

St. Paul then tells the story of one greater man. As sin and death entered into the world through the actions of one man, bringing God's righteous judgment, condemning and bringing all under the dominion of death. One greater than the first comes. Where the first man stumbled and fell, this One man, God himself, Christ our Lord through one great act of obedience brings about the free gift of Grace to all forgiving the sins of the children of Adam. Washing away yours and mine. Through Jesus act of obedience he brings justification - making the relationship between God and man right and good again. Through Jesus act of obedience where death once reigned, life springs forth. For those under the condemnation of sins since Adam, new life, life eternal reigns.

This act of obedience is the Cross. Where Adam's single decision brought death and evil into the world. This one good and righteous act, God Himself in the flesh goes to the cross for you and for me and for all of Adam's children. Jesus goes to the cross willingly, he suffers immensely at the hands of those He came to save. He is spit on, beaten and nailed to a cross where He dies. Through His death - we find the death of all of our sins. All of the trespasses since Adam's first decision are put to death, and in His rising life comes to those once condemned and bound for death. In the death of one on the Cross, the world finds life. God's grace poured out over sins, the relationship between man and God restored and eternal life for all who believe and trust in this amazing act of love.

This is what this season of Lent is about. St. Paul directs to focus in one the One Man. This Jesus God in the Flesh. In this season we have a different lens that we view we see Jesus. We see Him as the one who suffered horrific things on our behalf. Who willingly endured it all that grace, justification and life might be brought to all. So this season of Lent is somber. We take time to focus in on this suffering and death of our savior and as we look at our savior, we also ponder what caused him to willingly endure those things for us.

So in this season of Lent as we hear about Jesus suffering and death, as we see what Jesus has done for us, it shapes us as we encounter this suffering Jesus. Lent is somber because in viewing this Jesus who died for us, we realize the seriousness of our sins. What we look at as small missteps, as minor offences, what we see as little sins that God can just forgive, we are confronted with grisly suffering and the death of Jesus. There is no small sin, Jesus has died because of them. Lent shapes us to realize just how serious our sin is, we are confronted with the sheer cost of the free grace given to us in Jesus. Christ on the cross.

In Lent, we realize how unworthy we are to have this amazing love of our Savior. We realize what our Lord suffered that we might be free of Sin, death and the Devil. The lens of Lent shows us Jesus Passion, his immense suffering for you and for me.

So this Lent we see Jesus through this lens and it shapes our practice. This Wednesday we received ashes on our heads. We were reminded that dust we are and dust we shall return. Black, gritty, uncomfortable ash was put on our head. We remember our sin, the death that is ours because of it, the evil that we are marked with. Yet it is drawn in the form of a cross. To point us that the One man, Jesus has died for us.

That grace, a right relationship with God and life eternal are ours because of the suffering and death of Jesus.

For Lent many fast or give up of certain things. We do this that in the realization of this missing thing we might remember our savior. Others give up vices because Lent has shaped them to realize the seriousness of their sin and what their forgiveness cost our savior. This season of Lent invites us to look at Jesus as the one who died for us. As we look at this one man and His saving work on the cross it shapes us to realize the seriousness of sin and the extreme love our savior has for us. So whatever your practice for this Lent, may help you see more clearly this savior on the cross.

Lent is a difficult season as we look at this Jesus and what He has done for us. It forces us to realize what Christ has truly suffered and endured for us. But ultimately Lent prepares to be Easter people. That after these 40 days, as we drawn to the empty tomb, to the risen Lord. That we might find joy unlike any other. As we see our savior, our Risen King not Dead, but alive, we see the hope on display that is ours. That in our savior, we have life eternal with Him. That as we were baptized into His death, we look forward to rising with him into new life, with all of those since Adam who have fallen asleep in Him. We look forward with Joy to the New Creation, to life eternal where sin death and devil will have no dominion.

So this Lent, we keep our eyes on this One man, on this Jesus. Knowing that it will reveal to us some difficult and hard truths about ourselves, but we also know that this One-man Jesus is source of our greatest Easter Joy. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

