

An overview of Lent themes - 2022

Your ways, O God, are higher than our ways.

Your thoughts, O God, are higher than our thoughts.

From security to generosity

Deut. 26:1-11; Ps 91:1-2, 9-16; Luke 4:1-13; Romans 10:8b-13

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from prioritizing our personal security to living with generosity toward our neighbors.

Reflection question: What are you holding on to that can be released, freeing you to be generous?

From fear to compassion

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Ps 27; Luke 13:31-35; Phil. 3:17-4:1

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from a place where fear dictates our actions to a space where our response to others is guided by compassion.

Reflection questions: Where are you standing at this moment? Not yet under Jesus' "wings," or ready to step out without fear?

From earning to receiving

Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; Luke 13:1-9; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from believing that we must earn our nourishment, our privileges, even our identity as God's children, to an understanding that abundant life is a gift from God to all.

Reflection questions: How are you receiving God's gift of grace today? When do you have an opportunity to pass along God's grace by allowing others (& yourself) the time they need to grow & change?

From exceptionalism to inclusion

Joshua 5:9-12; Ps 32; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from a sense that "we" and "ours" have special standing to the knowledge that all are equally part of God's kingdom.

Reflection question: Who gets to enjoy God's feast today?

From scarcity to abundance

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; John 12:1-8; Philippians 3:4b-14

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from the fear that there is

not enough to the freedom of living within God's abundance.

Reflection Questions: Where can you give *something*?

Where can you give *all*?

Our text from Isaiah reminds us that God has a new way. God's way offers amazing abundance and compassion in a wilderness place of scarcity and fear, beyond our wildest imaginations.

We find this surprising abundance in Paul's words to the Philippians: everything else is like trash next to knowing Christ, the source of abundance. Oneness in Christ transforms us to be generous, compassionate, to humbly receive grace and share it with all.

Mary's anointing of Jesus embodies this abundant way. She gave everything she had without expecting anything in return. She was criticized for using expensive oil in this way by those who viewed it from a scarcity mindset.

Her critics were not thinking, "This is Jesus! Nothing else matters!" It can be scary to give everything we have to Jesus, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead because everything but Jesus is garbage." (Philippians 3:8 & 13).

From power over to power with

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Ps. 31:9-16; Luke 22:14-23:56; Philippians 2:5-11

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from an understanding of power that grasps for control over others to an understanding that true power comes from working with and for others in love.

Reflection questions: Where are you working with and for others *in love*? In council and congregational meetings? In relationships in your family and community?

From certainty to openness Jesus is Risen!

Isaiah 65:17-25; Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24; John 20:1-18; 1 Cor. 15:19-26

Focus: As we seek God's way, we move from the confidence of knowing how things are to the unsettling openness of realizing God's ways are beyond what we can imagine.

Reflection questions: When has your certainty of "the way things are" been rolled away to reveal openness to God's ways? When you look beyond what you think you know, what do you see then?