

Ash Wednesday
Words of Reflection



Joel 2.1-2, 12-13

Lent, like Advent (a similar season of preparation for new life), is a turning, an overturning, a re-turning. Lent disrupts the conventional wisdom of a world that says we begin in life and end in death. As followers of Christ, we know that we begin in life and end in life eternal. Win, win – all because of God’s gift of Jesus for each of us.

The prophet Joel encouraged the people of Israel to return to God, for as the prophet reminded them, “God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.” That same promise is ours as we begin this forty-day journey of self-reflection and repentance. Keeping God’s grace and mercy in mind, what it is that you need to turn over to God in this holy time so that you may truly experience the gift of wholeness and an unburdened life?

2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10

Lent is a time to recognize that we cannot change the past, but we can turn from our sin and step more confidently on the path that God has stretched before us. In his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul declares that the day of salvation is at hand. Yes, our life is hard, Paul exclaims . . . then there comes a triumphant “and yet . . . Paul reminds us that we don’t have to get stuck in the hard places. We wear these ashes that mark our mortality, and yet we are on a journey of life. We

face situations that break our hearts daily, and yet we declare those hearts belong to God. We admit that we have strayed from the pathways of righteousness, and yet we profess our repentance and turn toward the good. How is God saying to you, “I acknowledge with you your sin of _____ and yet, I love you unconditionally” today?

Matthew 6.1-6, 19-21

We slow our pace during these forty days because the landscape of Lent takes us through the wildernesses of our own hearts and souls. We must walk carefully. We must think deeply. We must allow our hearts to be broken open. We must be willing to lay bare all that is hidden, buried, or repressed. Jesus reminds us not to store up our treasures on earth but rather in heaven because, as he tells us in this Sermon on the Mount, where our heart is, there will our treasure be. As you reflect upon this reading from Matthew’s gospel, consider what your treasures are and, subsequently, where your heart truly is.



(Portions of these reflections have been adapted from)
www.umcdiscipleship.org and <http://lutheranjulia.blogspot.com>