

PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



Lent 2021

Reflective Readings

This material is intended for personal meditation. You may want to be in a quiet place and light your own personal candle, but you may also just be sitting in your car waiting for an appointment. Where you are is not the point. The point is that you are taking the time to be quiet and listen so that you may walk through your day in communion with God. Each page contains a reading

What is Lent?

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and continues for 40 days (not counting Sundays) until Easter. The word Lent is derived from words in several different languages that mean "spring". The practice of Lent in the Christian Church dates from the Nicean Council in 325 AD. That Council recognized the 40 days prior to Easter as a time for spiritual preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today that time is spent in study, fasting, prayer and special offerings. Often people will "give up" something for Lent in order to give more time to study and prayer. The point being to deepen one's relationship with God in order to better understand the relationship of the death and resurrection of Jesus to your life and to the life of your community.

In 2021 the Tabernacle community spent the season of Epiphany looking into the face of Jesus, watching and learning as Jesus grew from a small boy into a man living into the ministry he was called to on earth. During the Lenten season we will walk with Jesus as he turns his attention to his final task on earth. We will work to understand how his death and resurrection impact who we are as people choosing to follow this person who gave his life to show us how to live in the Kingdom of God. I especially like the Frederick Buechner reading on Lent when he states "During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves." What does it mean to yourself living in God's Kingdom here on earth.

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PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



Lent

In many cultures there is an ancient custom of giving a tenth of each year's income to some holy use. For Christians, to observe the forty days of Lent is to do the same thing with roughly a tenth of each year's days. After being baptized by John in the river Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent forty days asking himself the question what it meant to be Jesus. During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves.

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?

To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become. It can be pretty depressing business all in all, but if sackcloth and ashes are at the start of it, something like Easter may be at the end.

Buechner, Frederick, *Whistling in the Dark: a Doubter's Dictionary* (Harper SanFrancisco: SanFrancisco) 1993, p. 82-83.

PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



Christ's Journey/Our Journey

Everything in the macrocosm has its counterpart in the microcosm.
Everything in the grand picture has its counterpart in the everyday.
Every part of the Christ story has a corresponding element in our story.
Our journey is the Christ journey.

It is important that we not only see Christ as a point in time,
because God is God not only of time, but of space also.
Christ is not of time only, but of space also.
God includes and transcends all time.
Christ includes and transcends all time.

It is important that we see Christ mythologically, symbolically,
as the truest of metaphors----as a metaphor for our
sacredness, as metaphor for our journey--not only on earth, but
within, our journey within.

The Christ journey teaches us not only how one person lived, but of truths
we will grasp or die learning.

The Christ Journey teaches us that there is no abundance without
sacrifice. ("I have come that they may have life---abundantly."
and He gave up His spirit.)

The Christ journey teaches us that every sacrifice can be followed by
fullness, that every dying can be followed by newness, that every
hurt can be followed by hope.

Cherwien, Susan Palo. Crossings: Meditations for Worship (Morningstar Publishers: Fenton Mo) 2003, p. 190

PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



The Center

There is a still point at the center of the cross where all is in
harmony all in balance.
It is here at this point where the tensions of the crossings are equal
and cannot pull.
It is like the wheel of destiny depicted in mediaeval illuminations:
if you place yourself at the rim,
you are constantly being pulled down or pushed up,
but if you place yourself at the center,
"at the still point of the turning world,"
there is calm,
there is peace.

Cherwien, Susan Palo. *Crossings: Meditations for Worship* (Morningstar Publishers: Fenton Mo) 2003, p. 191

Dying with Christ

For the new to come forth
something must die;
For transformation to take place
something must be left behind;
the seed is no longer exactly what it was:
it has left its seedness behind
to become moonflower----
it has left its hard husk behind
to become vulnerable.

"I tell you," said Jesus
"Unless the grain of wheat dies,
it cannot bear fruit."

Jesus set aside power
and became vulnerable.
Jesus left behind security
and became the Crucified One,
and ultimately the Risen One.

And so we must ask, what must we leave
behind?
And we ask, what in us must die?

Cherwien, Susan Palo. *Crossings: Meditations for Worship* (Morningstar Publishers: Fenton Mo) 2003, p. 77

PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



Letting Go

Not all that is planted in us
by our ancestors
should be treasured
and clung to
not all that is planted
bears good fruit
hatreds feuds walls
misunderstanding separation
flawed belief
fear
there is chaff
mixed in with the grain
chaff that must
be
sifted out
consciously carefully
old hurts
wounds
wars

vibrate across the centuries
through us
and take form
in this time
and place
unless we
take the sickle
in hand
consciously carefully
and harvest
and sift
and choose
which songs we will
sing
and
sing on.

Cherwien, Susan Palo, *To God I Give My Melody: Reflections for Worship* (Morningstar Music: Fenton Mo., 2019)
p. 22-23.

PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



Lent

After the twelve days of Christmas,
After the day of Epiphany
when the great wise men of the East came to
Jesus,
after we learn
through the winter day
of the various ways Jesus
 called people
 taught people
 healed people
 loved people
As the days begin to lengthen,
As we begin to feel a need to be done with
winter
we enter a time called Lent.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday
(Why ashes?
Ashes for repentance, like Job

Ashes for cleansing----ashes are an ingredient
in soap, after all----)
Beginning with Ash Wednesday
for forty weekdays
we journey
forty days
a reminder of Jesus' forty days
in the wilderness
to prepare for his mission on earth
For forty days
we journey
we repent
we pray for a clean heart
we prepare for our mission on earth
we prepare for the coming spring
we prepare for the coming Easter
for the coming newness
and Jesus journey's with us
all the way

Cherwien, Susan Palo, *To God I Give My Melody: Reflections for Worship* (Morningstar Music: Fenton Mo., 2019)
pp. 50-51.

PRELUDE

Lenten Reflective Readings



Loneliness

That you can be lonely in a crowd, maybe especially there, is readily observable. You can also be lonely with your oldest friends, or your family, even with the person you love most in the world. To be lonely is to be aware of an emptiness which it takes more than people to fill. It is to sense that something is missing which you cannot name.

“By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion,” sings the Psalmist (137:1). Maybe in the end it is Zion that we’re lonely for, the place we know best by longing for it, where at last we become who we are, where finally we find home.

Frederick Buechner, **Whistling in the Dark: a Doubter’s Dictionary** (SanFrancisco: HarperSanFrancisco) 1988, p. 83.