

Season of Lent

Introduction

Lent is a time of positive action; we don't give up things just because it's Lent, but because we believe it has positive value. Lent is also a time of almsgiving, a time of self-sacrifice, a time of prayer.

In Holy Week we look at Christ's path to the cross. We see a suffering Christ, a Christ who shows us the meaning of our own suffering. We see the story of the suffering world, of daily death and resurrection. For us it shows a way of love which we must follow and try to live, to make the world we live in a better place for everyone.

Many times throughout Jesus Christ's life he told us to love one another.

'Love one another as I have loved you.'

'Love God above all things. Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

Putting these words into action is a lot easier said than done. Maybe today we can take the time to think about the ways we have failed to do this and maybe consider the ways in which we can carry this command out, to make the world we live in a better place.

St Paul tells us:

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes ... There are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13: 4-13

Reflection

Love is patient and kind

Am I patient with myself?

Do I expect too much of myself?

Do I get angry when I fail?

Am I impatient in prayer?

Do I stop praying if I don't get quick results?

Do I remember to pray for others?

Am I patient with others?

Do I get irritable at other people's failures or weaknesses?

Am I gentle and kind in my speech?

Do I speak well of others?

Do I act kindly towards those in a less privileged position than myself?

Reflection

Love is never jealous, boastful or conceited

Am I jealous of someone else's good fortune or success?

Am I affronted if others don't live up to my expectations?

Do I expect more of others than I do of myself?

Do I criticise others so they lose confidence?

Do I look for praise from others?

Am I slow to thank, to encourage or to praise?

Do I bother to listen to others?

Am I slow to apologise or to admit my faults?

Reflection

Love is never rude or selfish

Do I treat others with the same respect due to them as people?

Does my language reflect human dignity?

Am I ever arrogant, obstinate or overbearing?

Do I insist on what I want before thinking about others?

Do I consider the effect that my actions have on others?

Do I use my own and other people's property with due care?

Do I ever deliberately hurt another?

Do I seek pleasure at the expense of others?

Does my selfishness ever lead me to ignore God?

Reflection

Love does not take offence, and is not resentful

Am I touchy about my rights?

Am I prepared to accept criticism?

Do I feel slighted if others are preferred to me?

How do I react to my failures?

How do I respond if I am unjustly treated or misunderstood?

Do I forgive those who sin against me?

Do I ask forgiveness from those whom I have sinned against?

Am I resentful at the way God treats me?

Do I drive others to resentment by harshness, unreasonableness, thoughtlessness or selfishness?

Am I resentful of my own weaknesses?

Do I resent my dependence on others and on God?

Reflection

Love delights in the truth

Am I a truthful person?

Do I try to grow in the understanding of truth?

Do I pray for God's spirit of truth in my life?

Do I gossip, or spread rumours, or scandal?

Do I hide or distort truth by my speech, my actions or my silence?

Do I respect those who hold different beliefs from mine?

Do I try to share my vision of truth with others?

Do I look and listen for God in my life?

Reflection

Love is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope

Am I quicker to judge others than I am to judge myself?

Do I try to understand the actions of others?

Am I ready to accept others, whatever their faults?

Do I make excuses for myself when I sin?

Am I able to forgive myself?

Do I help others to grow and to hope by putting my trust in them?

Do I believe that nothing can separate me from the love of God?

Am I able to accept my weaknesses, knowing that Christ's strength will work in me?

Prayer

So Lord, for the times we have been impatient and unkind to others, we ask your forgiveness.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

For the times we have been self-centred, proud, angry and rude to one another, we ask your forgiveness.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

For the times we have failed to help those in need, we ask your forgiveness, Lord.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

God loves the world so much that he sacrificed his son so that his death would be a sign that everyone would be saved from sin and death. We remember this love, especially during Holy Week.

If we want to make the world we live in a better place and show that we as Christians are doing as Christ asked, we must show love, care and forgiveness to everyone – no matter what their colour, race or religion. It's not up to someone else, it's up to us!

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

We are ashamed of our record of failure.

We acknowledge our faults and failings with sorrow and we ask forgiveness.

Help us to rely more on you.

As you forgive us, help us to love and forgive others.

Let us now turn to the Father, who always forgives, and pray together with the words he taught us.

Our Father ...

Prayer

Lord of the morning,
I'm trying to forgive myself
for the mistakes I've made.
There are too many 'if onlys' in my life.
If only I had been more thoughtful.
If only I had been kinder.
I blame myself for so many things,
yet I cannot turn back the clock.
I have to live today,
even with my self-inflicted wounds.
Lord, help me to live with myself.

Lord, in this hour
I need to be able to forgive myself,
but I also need to be able to forgive others, to really forgive.
How often have I gone through the motions of forgiveness,
only to let my mind dwell on the wrong remembered?
And even to talk about the people who have failed me.
That is not forgiveness.
I know that I cannot erase experiences from my mind,
but even bitter wounds heal,
and though scars remain,
they can grow faint and be forgotten.
Lord of life,
help me to forgive, and to be forgiven.

It would be so good to be able to start again,
with a clean sheet;
to make a new beginning,
to be born again.
In this hour, Lord,
help me to look forward
rather than to sigh over past events.
Help me to see the good that can be done,
the caring that can be offered,
the love that can be given.

Whilst I mope about myself
there are people waiting for the kindness I can give.
Lord, help me to give, to share,
to start again a renewed life.
Lord of the morning,
forgive me and help me to start again.