

Today is the last Sunday after Epiphany which is also known as Transfiguration Sunday because we always hear the story of Jesus going up the mountain to pray and being transformed in front of the disciples. Jesus' garments becoming dazzling white and Moses and Elijah appear with him. We also hear about the cloud that descends on them and that God's voice comes from the cloud saying This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!

This amazing event sets us up for Lent as we join Jesus on his journey to the cross and beyond to resurrection. But did you notice that in our gospel we did not hear just about the transfiguration? We also heard the story of a sick boy who the disciples could not heal. When Jesus comes down from the mountain, he heals the child at the behest of the boy's father.

In my almost 15 years of ordained ministry, I have never remembered this story being told with the transfiguration. In our lectionary cycle of readings, it is only in year C when we are reading from the gospel of Luke, that we have the option to include the story of the boy possessed by a demon. I suspect I don't remember it because I probably did what I did this year which was to not include this second story. You'll see that reflected in our bulletin.

However, when I read the commentary on this gospel by Debie Thomas¹, I began to see that the story of the boy in need of healing can enhance the transfiguration of Jesus. Debie Thomas asks how the glory on the mountaintop speaks to the pain in the valley. A good question indeed and one that reminded me of our spiritual lives – our journey with Jesus. At times, we bask in the glory of being with Jesus and are held up by his strength and power. At other times, Jesus can seem very far away and we find ourselves away from God - lonely and in pain.

Lent is important because it provides an intentional time for us to look at our lives with Jesus and see where we are in our spiritual lives. If you are in the glory/basking mode, wonderful! Maybe you can build on that this Lent. If you are struggling or in a difficult place, perhaps this Lent will help you start the journey back to a closer walk with God.

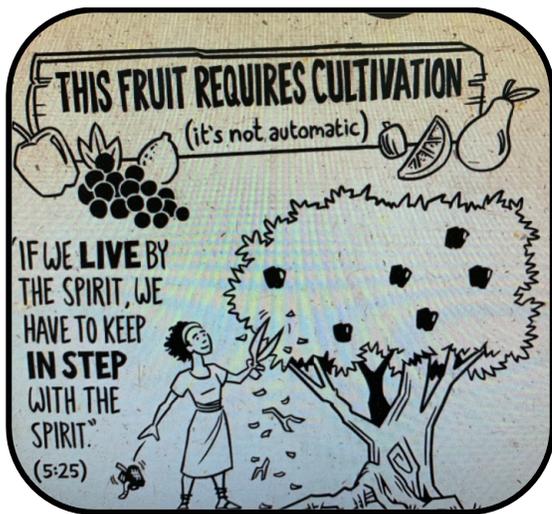
Saturday before last, our Way of St. Paul Team, that is working on growing our church, attended the kickoff for the third season of this program. We were reminded that churches grow when the people in them are growing spiritually and that one of our main goals is to help those in our congregation grow in their spiritual life. We were asked to think about one step we could do to help our congregation deepen their lives with God. We knew Lent was around the corner and wanted to offer an opportunity to look at spiritual practices for Lent to help all of us come closer to God.

So today, you are invited to take some time to think about how you will grow closer to Christ as we enter our observance of Lent. You have a handout called, "What practices could you take up this Lent that will help grow your discipleship" with some options for practices during Lent. You may have already decided what you want to do for Lent. But I still ask you to look at the suggested options as you think about how your Lenten practice will bring you closer to God or how it will renew your relationship with God. *Give people 2-3 minutes to look at the handout. Handout is at the end of this document.*

Then I invite you to pair up with another person and share what practice you are planning to take up or thinking about for Lent. You don't have to have chosen one. Share your thoughts and hesitations. Sometimes another person listening will help you find your path. *Give people 5-6 minutes to share.*

¹ [https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2100-lights-and-shadowsspiritual lives which includes times of glory and times of despair](https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2100-lights-and-shadowsspiritual%20lives%20which%20includes%20times%20of%20glory%20and%20times%20of%20despair).

Our life with God can be the most life giving and sustaining relationship in our lives. This relationship needs our care and attention. So this Lent, turn again to Christ maybe in a different way that you have done before and see what God has in store for you.



Galatians 5:25

What practice could you take up in Lent that will help grow your discipleship?

Some spiritual practices to consider. Which one will you choose?

- _____ Use a daily devotional booklet – The booklets, Our Daily Bread and Forward Day by Day, are available at church and also online odb.org and prayer.forwardmovement.org. We also have devotional booklets specifically for Lent.
- _____ Star99.1 Challenge - listen to this Christian radio station for Lent.
- _____ Daily Bible reading - Use the scriptures in the Taking Faith Home bulletin insert or try out the ReadScripture app.
- _____ Volunteer - at St. Peter's Food pantry or anywhere.
- _____ Daily devotions for Individuals and Families in the Book of Common Prayer – one page prayer service for morning, noon, early evening and at the close of the day. They start on page 137 and can be done by yourself or with others. Some people do them throughout the day.
- _____ Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer – Morning Prayer (pg. 75), Noonday Prayer (pg. 103), Evening Prayer (p. 115) and Compline (pg. 127). This is a longer prayer service than the Daily Devotions and includes scriptures of the day. You can prayer the offices online at missionstclare.org.
- _____ On Sundays, meet someone new for coffee hour and learn about their life.
- _____ Give up TV or Facebook for Lent.
- _____ Meditate for 5 min or more a day.
- _____ Daily random act of kindness.
- _____ Attend our Lenten Program on Thursday evenings – Life Transformed – The Way of Love. See flyer for dates, times and places.
- _____ Taking Faith Home insert – Read it every week and use one of their suggestions to deepen your spiritual life.
- _____ Other _____