

HURLEY REFORMED CHURCH

THE SPIRE

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WHAT LENT MEANS TO US

Lent is a very special season which follows Epiphany in the church calendar. Within 150 years of the death and resurrection of our Lord, churches throughout the Mediterranean world began to recognize the importance of commemorating Jesus' life, from wilderness temptation, to costly death. During Lent one becomes aware of the importance of the desert experience. Lent lasts for forty days, in recognition of Jesus' 40 day fast in the desert. Forty is significant in the Old Testament as well. Both Elijah and Moses fast for forty days. On a grander scale, the number represents years as well as days. Lent commemorates Israel's 40 year sojourn in the parched arena of Sinai after its liberation from Egypt. Because of this desert focus, Christians value fasting, 'marathon' praying, and other ascetic acts which draw us closer to our Lord.

Interestingly, Lent actually lasts for 46 days. Why? Deep in its heart the church has always known that Sunday, the Lord's day, "Little Easter"--was not a day for fasting or penitential self examination. Sunday is a feast rather than a fast day; a day to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. So punctuating the forty day desert experience are the six Sundays of Lent on which the redemptive truth of the resurrection was remembered and celebrated.

My prayer for all of us is that we will experience Christ's resurrecting hand even in our most arid experiences. Even when we wander in a desert of our own making, or are trapped in the wilderness of events beyond our control, we will celebrate the hope of miraculous renewal. I pray that you will pick up one of our devotionals in the narthex of the church to help you grow in faith during this Lenten period. I hope, too, that you will read what the leaders of our congregation have written about this special period, using biblical texts assigned for the Sundays in Lent. May we continue to grow in grace and truth during this holy season.

In Christ's service,

Dr. Bob Gram



SERMONS ARE NOW AVAILABLE ON CD

If you were away, touched by something you heard, or would like to share with someone, please help yourself to one of the complimentary discs found on the table in the vestibule. Copies of previous sermons continue to be available. Call the office to request one.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT



Sandra Gregory
Elder

Interestingly, as Jesus begins his public ministry, one of the first things that each of the gospel writers tells us is that he went into the desert to pray and prepare for the ministry ahead, and during those forty days he was tempted, or tested, repeatedly by Satan. As surely as Satan intended the temptation to cause Jesus to fail, the Holy Spirit intended to strengthen Jesus in preparation for what was to come. Jesus emerges to proclaim the Good News and urges everyone to repent and turn from sin. He was one who

knew no sin, and he was strong enough to hold the weight of the sins of the world. As we enter this Lenten season, may we remember that the power the Holy Spirit will help us with our trials and temptations. All we need to do is ask for help.

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Mark 1:9-15

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’”

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.”

“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.’”

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH

Mark 8:31-38

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life^{al} will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Footnotes:

[Mark 8:35](#) The Greek word means either life or soul; also in verse 36.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Jesus needed to convince his followers beyond any shadow of a doubt that He indeed is the Son of God. As much as we loathe those who inflicted the pain and suffering on Him that we remember during Lent, they were a vital part of God’s plan. Had Jesus never suffered, we might not have known 2000 years later that He lived, and that we too might have eternal life.



Dan Stott
Deacon

In this passage, Jesus tells us the secret: Be not ashamed of Jesus, and accept our trials and tribulations – they are opportunities to bring honor and glory to Him and His Father.

But I’m a bottom-line, cut-to-the-chase kind of guy. For me, the message here is simply this: Life is supposed to be hard; probably much harder than it is for many of us living here in beautiful Hurley. One of our choices is to give up all the good things we have and live a life of destitution – God will see us through. But the better choice is to use the blessings He has bestowed upon us to accomplish goals that are so big that they can only be achieved with God’s help.

Nothing is impossible to God!

Dear Lord, thank you for the countless blessings you bestow upon us every day. Please help us to show our gratitude by opening our eyes to opportunities to use those blessings to accomplish things so big that we can only do so with your help. We gratefully acknowledge that nothing is impossible to you. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

In this passage Jesus is reminding us the Church is more than just mortar and bricks. He states "Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days." You can destroy the physical church structure but the Church will remain standing through the congregation.



Diana Cline
Deacon

Our mission statement supports this view. We state that we will: "Serve Christ by serving our community and the world, inviting all people to share God's love. To assure that this fellowship remains a vital force in our daily lives and community, we faithfully commit our time, talent and treasures that God has entrusted to us." Today's community is the "place" where God dwells.

JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE

John 2:13-22

"When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!'"

"His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'"

"Then the Jews demanded of him, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?'"

"Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.'"

"The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."

JESUS TEACHES NICODEMUS

John 3:14-21

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever believes by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly on what he has done has been done through God."

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Moses used the lifting of the serpent in the desert as a physical sign so the people of Israel would understand the idea of the body being lifted up; so Jesus is lifted up so we today can see the sign for eternal life.



Doug Constant
Elder

One might ask: "Just how much does God love the world?" The truth is that he loves the world such that he gave his one and only son. Jesus wasn't here on earth to accuse us, but to tell us how bad the world really was. If we trust in him, we are acquitted; if we refuse to trust in him, then we might as well have been issued a death sentence.

The word "darkness" in the Bible is symbolic of ignorance, falsehood, delusions, and our unwillingness to believe. Many of us don't believe because we have chosen that path. It isn't that people can't believe, but that they refuse the offer. Perhaps they don't believe what the Bible says. Perhaps they don't want the Bible to be true because it would demand a change in their lifestyle. Perhaps acknowledging the truth of the Gospel would be too costly.

If we can expose the real cause of our disbelief, then we may have met our goal, and will be able to see the light!

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH

John 12:20-33

"Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus."

"Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.'"

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

"Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him."

"Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die."

How many times do we come to a situation and find ourselves praying, "Please God let this not be so"? From the mundane prayer for the rain to stop before the picnic to those moments in life when the fear is so strong or the need so great that the prayer becomes, as Paul says in Romans 8:26, a sigh too deep for words, we turn to God in hopes of having the burden lifted. When I was still young I went through a major illness. This gave me the opportunity to reflect a great deal on prayer and its role in my life. For a long time I had two pieces of paper taped up on a cabinet where I would see them every day. One was a cartoon panel with the character standing on his sinking ship, shaking his fist at the Heavens and shouting 'Why me?' and a voice booming back from the clouds, 'Why not?'. The other was a phrase cut out of somewhere that said simply "All prayers are answered but sometimes the answer is no". Oddly, these statements gave me comfort. I was not being singled out for punishment, and I was not alone.



Cindy Sumerano
Elder

I do not understand what it is that causes some to lose their faith in adversity, and others to find their faith strengthened, but I suspect it has something to do with the messages on those two pieces of paper. If my belief hinges on God giving me a way out, I might never see His guidance in the way through. Even Christ doesn't face his future easily. "Now my soul is in turmoil, and what am I to say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?" I don't believe that the Father expects more of us. Uncertainty, fear, even anger are allowed, but within those very human emotions we need to find the space to ask not only for the burden to be lifted, but, if necessary, for the strength to carry it. Perhaps, like Christ, the hour for which we were put on earth is also our darkest, or perhaps it is simply hidden in the routine we follow everyday. Perhaps, to paraphrase another John, it is what happens while we're making other plans.

Thank you to everyone for coming out to support our Spaghetti Dinner on February 14th. Kudos also to all of the workers in whatever function that you did in support of this dinner. We raised \$2254. It was a sell out crowd at both seatings. We ate, we listened to Italian love songs, and we visited—we had fun!

Are you tired of that snow, I know I am. With spring getting closer thoughts of flowers are on our mind. This means the Easter flowers are just around the corner. We will be selling them to decorate the church altar for our Easter services. See the order form included.

You are invited to attend a meeting & see what we are all about.

Sandy Emrich-President

Women's Guild

- 3/15/09 Meeting & butterfly exchange
- 4/5/09 Easter egg hunt
- 4/19/09 Meeting
- 5/17/09 Pot Luck Luncheon



Youth Group

Upcoming Events

3/3/09	Brooks BBQ
3/8/09	Meeting
3/29/09C	Coffee hour
4/11/09	Prep for Dawn Service and Breakfast
4/12/09	Easter Dawn
4/24-26/09	Camp Warwick
5/30-6/1/09	Relay for Life 11am till 1am
6/5/09	Penny Social
6/6/09	Car Wash at Stage One Auto on Rt 9W

We made and you purchased chili for our Souper Bowl chili sale that on Feb. 1st and we raised \$550. We gave \$275 to Queens Galley and \$275 to the Caring Hands Feeding Program at the Clinton Ave Methodist Church. Thank you so much for your support. Thank you to Adams for the donation of the meat for the chili and to Karen Waligurski for coordinating the sale.

We went tubing at Sawkill Family Ski on Feb 1st. About 33 people attended. We brought hot coco & snack. The sun was out that day and fun was had by all. Thank you to Melinda Herzog for coordinating this fun filled day.

Our trip to the CT Maritime Aquarium on Feb. 21 was great. 56 people attended. We saw penguins, seals & a great I-Max movie. We did "sleep with the otters" and lived to tell about it.

Our March & April collection will be laundry detergent & dryer sheets for the Ronald McDonald house in Albany, NY. The families really appreciate it. Let's help them have one less thing to think of. Please put these items in our collection bin.

If you would like to join us please come to a meeting and get involved. We would love to have you.

Sandy & Katie Emrich, Lisa Longto
Youth Group Leaders

Property and Maintenance

The ice man came.... Sure hope he's gone now

The ice certainly caked up on us during January and February. We chopped and salted and cleared the roof as much as possible.. Thanks to those that helped sand and salt. It looks like we're done with ice now (Thank God)

The Hymnbooks are safe!

Thank you to those that brought to our attention that some of the racks that hold the hymnbooks were coming apart. We've gone through the sanctuary and glued/tacked the racks so no hymnbook will fall out (so they are safe... get it?)

The Snow blower is back from the hospital

Thanks very much to the Jordans for arranging for Herzog to take the snowblower and fix it. We really appreciate the help. Thanks also to others that offered to look at it. I'm sure something else will need looking after soon so stay tuned!

-Joe Ulrich



"Most of us can forgive and forget; we just don't want the other person to forget that we forgave."

-Ivern Ball

Deposit Bottles and Cans Return

Please keep bringing in your deposit bottles & cans. There are only a few more months of this fund raiser for our Relay for Life team. All proceeds will be going to the American Cancer Society. Thanks for your help and support.

HURLEY REFORMED
CHURCH

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Pastor

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BIRTHDAYS

March

Kevin Kurtz	3, '92
Ireland Sirni	6, '97
William Gaffken	23, '98
Lily Gram Collins	1
Wynne Stickley-Parker	1
Craig Jansen	2
Terry Read	2
Linda Bognar	3
Jack Gill	5
Dennis Horvers	5
Todd Mangiagli	6
Dr. Bob Gram	6
Marianne Mizel	7
Elizabeth Askue	8
Barbara Sartorius	10
Barry Rell	10
Kim Burgess	13
Deborah Zuill	14
Allan Masters	14

Ellen Stephano	14
Frank Warren	17
Frank Presti	17
Joyce Pinckney	18
Dino Sumerano	18
Angie Rockwell	19
Janet Crowell	19
David Howells	19
Katrina Rubino	19
Amy Crantz	23
Jean Marrus	24
Christine Henning	24
Gretchen Giles	24
Phyllis Bliss	24
Gloria Johnson	26
Mark Conlin	27
Cathy McGraw	27
Jennifer Hinsdale	28
Stephen Strouse	29
Ruth Lord	30
Ellen Morone	31
Alice Dumond	31

Scott DeMicco	31
<i>April</i>	
Travis Horvers	2, '98
Jack Stelter	3, '96
Trevor Davenport	4, '92
Wayne Waligurski	1
Mildred Mattison	4
Hattie Drake	5
Kathy Hauck	5



ANNIVER-

SARIES

Jean & Jay Marrus	March 9
Janet & Terry McWeeney	9
Emily & Art Harder	16
Wayne & Julie Johnson	24
Charles & Sheila Jansen	25
Fred & Virginia Suppies	27