



## A Word from Pastor Craig

Today is the first day of a new Church season — Lent. During these next 40 days, not including Sundays, Christ-followers focus our attention on the journey Jesus took to Jerusalem, and the cross he carried and died upon for the sake and sins of all humanity. The

cross is where sin was dealt with by God's only Son and our eternal debt, besides being paid for (ransomed), was expunged for all eternity. Our lives are redeemed only by God's grace, not of works, lest anyone should boast. It is the gift of God!

Lent offers us opportunities to reflect on the gifts of God, and the paths we follow, the journeys we embark upon, and the goals we set for our own lives. Our reflections are then set side by side with the difficult choices we discover Jesus made to fulfill God's will and his purpose on this planet. What is our purpose in life? How willing are we to forfeit our ways and instead acknowledge and participate in the eternal values of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Lent is not easy. It is not a matter of fulfilling one simple act and being done with it, be it going without coffee or cigarettes, cake or candy for so many days, or confessing our sins every once in a while. No, Lent is a season of significance. Its affect on us is meant to last past Easter. Lent invites us to discipline ourselves in ways that can impact our living way beyond these 40 days. Hopefully some new patterns and routines will emerge from our Lenten disciplines, and lead us toward healthier lifestyles, and ever deepening devotion to Christ, and his way of confronting hardship with trust in God, and meeting heartache with the peace of God.

Confession is one discipline of the Lenten journey. Granted, it is easier to confess some things than others. But it is usually the more difficult ones and the more personal problems that we need to confess, for they are the more likely barriers to our growth as Christians. Richard Foster, in his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, reminds us that, "honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to change."

After confessing the things you are aware of and can offer God easily, take some time in your day to consider anything that you may be having a harder time admitting to yourself or confessing to God. Use this week to invite God to enter that place of reluctance, and withholding. And then trust God to bring, not condemnation, but, forgiveness and cleansing; a new, blessed and redeemed way of living.

Take a few moments during this week to read the following passages. Allow yourself time to absorb the profound nature of what is being shared in these verses, and what is being promised us by the Holy and Risen Lord.

1 John 2:1-14 Mark 10:23-52 Mark 11 Romans 10:1-13  
Nehemiah 9:1-13 Proverbs 28:1-13