



A Word from Pastor Craig

This 40 day season of Lent, which began on Ash Wednesday, just two weeks ago, presents us with a unique opportunity to journey with Jesus to the cross, by practicing some of the disciplines Jesus lived out in his own life. One obvious discipline that we notice being practiced by Jesus, is his reading of the sacred texts.

Jesus seems to have spent a great deal of time studying the Hebrew Scriptures. In Matthew 5:43 for example, Jesus quotes from Leviticus 19:18, "...you shall love your neighbour as you love yourself". He shares a passage from Deuteronomy 6 with his followers in Luke 10:27, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind...". In Luke 13:35, we hear Jesus recite from Psalm 118, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord". Mark 11:17, includes a quote from Isaiah 56:7, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations". These are just a few examples of Jesus' awareness and great respect for passages we find in the Old Testament.

If Jesus read and studied the scriptures, it is a discipline that will certainly strengthen and deepen our faith too! George Cornell writes in his book, *The Untamed God*, "The bible is the record of those divine breakthroughs into human history. 'God's search for man,' rather than our search for God....it is a drumroll of events, people, struggles, great and terrible, of frailty, doubts, and heroism, of the ultimate might of right...it is a vivid, sometimes parabolic account of God's persistent, unrelenting quest for us and our stumbling, often faithless response."

I find that I can read the Bible in one of two ways. I can read it as if looking for what I want to say on a particular subject, or learn about further, to make my point later. That is one way of reading scripture, but it is a way that ultimately is found desperately lacking of any great value or authenticity. A second way to read the bible, is to open myself up so completely to its message, that I allow it to speak what it wills to me. When I do this, I am sometimes given

a reminder of a fact I already knew. Other times I am surprised by a fresh vantage point on a previously studied subject or theme. But then, there may come yet a further experience of God's Word, when, without warning, without being given any chance to prepare for it, or plan my retreat from it, I am overcome, or even undone! I am awakened by, or to, the awesome presence of God, without space to allow me to evade God's commanding call to pay attention! And I cannot move on or leave without realizing I have been pulled into a conversation I had not begun, but to which I must respond.

Frederick Buechner, says, "One particular voice speaks out [of scripture] that is unlike any other voice because it speaks so directly to the deepest privacy and longing and weariness of each of us." He goes on, "It is as if we stand with no shelter of time at all between ourselves and the one who speaks our secret name. Come, the voice says. Unto me."

During these days, I encourage you to take no protection into your daily reading of scripture; instead take great openness to whatever God might wish to place in your hands and in your heart that day. Let the full and Living expression of God's Word embrace you during your time with God.

Take a few moments and read some of the following passages.

John 8:31-38 Luke 10:25-42 Hebrews 4:12-13
1 Peter 1:13-25 Deuteronomy 30:11-14 2 Timothy 3:10-17