

Having lived in the south for about half of my life, I was well aware of the Pharisaic interpretation of keeping the Sabbath holy. In my younger years, the "blue laws" kept stores closed on Sundays; kids' summer baseball would never have been played on Sunday mornings; and we certainly didn't play cards on Sunday. Things have changed since then, and one wonders about holiness for any day of the week. When Gary and I participated in an interfaith clergy trip to Israel, we admired the rabbis on the trip who still observed their Sabbath rituals. We pondered how life in our own congregations might be different if we actually set aside one-seventh of our lives to be in the presence of holiness.

I recently heard a speaker offer a new and fresh understanding of Sabbath. He pointed out that God not only rested upon finishing the acts of creation, but also – and perhaps more important – looked out on all that had been created and said, "It is good." Observing the Sabbath is not just about rest; it is also about celebrating what is good and then blessing one another with that goodness. It is about giving thanks and then sharing with others from our abundance. That's what Jesus was about when he fed his companions and performed a miracle of healing on the Sabbath. And when he said that the Sabbath was made for us, he was blessing our humanity and calling us to recognize holiness in our acts of caring for one another.

O God of Creation, be present in our Sabbath observances that we may be blessings to others wherever and whenever we see someone in need. Amen.

Linda Walling

SUNDAY - FEBRUARY 17TH

Romans 6:3-14

Lent is relatively new to me. I grew up in a denomination that celebrates Easter, but doesn't actively observe Lent. So I'm still learning how to approach Lent. It seems to me that Lent is about each of us focusing on the greatest events in Christian history, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our pastor has asked us to be *intentional* about Lent this year. I can see in Jesus' last days a period of intensity – the climax of his ministry. Of course we know that Jesus' last days ended in the cross and resurrection, but when Jesus was *living* these last days he also knew what was ahead, and he intensified his energy and focus. His humanity felt the pain; his intentionality kept him moving forward.

In his letter to Roman Christians, Paul captures in Romans 6:3-14 the essence of Lent and Easter. Paul teaches that Jesus Christ conquered sin, surpassed death, and demonstrated the reality of life with God. But Paul isn't satisfied just to teach Christ's magnificent demonstration of God's power and grace. Paul is *intent* on pushing us forward, assuring us that we can have this new life too, and he urges us to get started.

Moving forward, being intentional, living a new life – I'm seeing all of these in Lent this year.

David Eggert



2008 LENTEN DEVOTIONS

WEEK TWO

Learning How to Be Human: 40 days of Intentions

MONDAY - FEBRUARY 11TH

MARK 1:1-13

Tough Love – The Proclamation of John the Baptist

John the Baptist's parents were devoted members of the temple, enjoying the patrician lifestyle of their social class. Their only son, John, however, shunned this atmosphere, preferring to live a primitive life alone in the desert. He also became a demanding evangelist, insisting upon a full-immersion baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins for all his followers. In this role, John fulfilled the prophecies of Malachi and of Isaiah, and throngs of people – including even his cousin, Jesus – flocked to the River Jordan to be baptized by the wilderness prophet.

Similarly, we Disciples of Christ require a full-immersion baptism of mature aspirants to our faith. But is this, alone, a sufficient act of dedication to our Lord? No, said John, portraying Jesus as the one who would baptize believers with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

We Disciples of Christ, and all other Christians, would do well to ask ourselves if we have been baptized, not only with water, but also with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Do we even know what this means? If not, let us begin to explore this vital matter, praying without ceasing for enlightenment and for the arrival of the Holy Spirit within our hearts and minds.

Father, remind us daily throughout this Lent, and always, to turn our wills and our lives wholly over to your care and direction, remembering to pray for the marvelous power of your Holy Spirit to indwell and transform us into your devoted Disciples of today.

Dr. Richard D. Burlingame

TUESDAY - FEBRUARY 12TH

MARK 1:14-28

"The time has come; the Kingdom of God is upon you. Come with me and I will make you fishers of men." And at once they followed him.

Jesus saw the gift in people that they couldn't see in themselves. He called the humble, the hurting, the afraid, the despised. Then He taught them to see the gift in others. He was not the Messiah they expected but they recognized the truth in him. **"He taught with authority."**

He is still looking for disciples. As Jesus has found us, he is sending us to find others. **“And at once they followed him.”**

Dear Father: Teach us to see the gift in all of your people. Amen.

Robin Phillips

WENESDAY - FEBRUARY 13TH

Genesis 37:25-36 and Mark 1:29-45

“Lost” and “Found”

I am not a very prolific writer and the task of putting thoughts down on paper is difficult, at best, but I am going to try.

It occurred to me, while I was reading the Scriptures in Genesis 37 and in Mark 1, that life is a lost and found. It caused me to reflect on our losses, our finds, and healing. We all have lost something, I don't mean car keys or that library book but life changing losses. Ones that profoundly effect our personal lives and our spiritual lives.

In recent years I've had quite a few losses but it never really occurred to me that, in exchange for these losses, I have experienced quite a few “finds”, also. So, here are some of mine.

When I felt that all hope was lost, I found a long lost friend who said “go to church with me.” In turn I found a renewed faith that I thought I had lost. I lost a feeling of hopelessness and found courage, instead. I have seen my boy lose sad, lonely eyes and an un-smiling face for new found smiles and laughter and happy blue eyes. We both have found not only our Faith, but Love, in our friendships and in our Church family, but most of all, in Christ.

I've lost a lot of tears but found so many smiles! I've lost a marriage but found self-respect. I've lost a few old friends but found so many new ones. I've lost “good” health but have found ways to help others in their needs.

On the other hand some losses aren't so “bad.” I've lost a growing anger and found faith and joy. I lost self-doubt and found inner strength. I have lost seething hatred and found the ability to forgive. I am losing self pity and finding a growing spiritualness. I was lost, but now, I'm sure, I've been found.

I have been healed by my faith in Christ. I have been healed, not necessarily where I thought I should be healed, my body, but where He knew I needed to be healed, in my heart and in my spirit.

So, in a life of lost and finds we pray for those who are lost. May they be found, as we have been found. We pray that the burdens, what ever they may be, that are weighing them down, be lost forever. And we pray that they find your Love, instead, and be lifted up into your arms and embrace you, Lord. We pray that we all can grow in our Faith as you guide us through our everyday lives and also our spiritual lives. Help us to understand your plans for us as disciples in your name, individually and as a church community. Amen.

Trish Burton

THURSDAY - FEBRUARY 14TH

Psalm 19 and Mark 2:1-12

A Prayer of Response to the Readings

Dear Lord,

In this Lenten Season, we have confessed our sins and asked for your forgiveness with a promise to be a better people.

You have given us so much to be thankful for . . .

The group of friends who we have shared these times with have strengthened us and, hopefully, we have a better understanding of the Holy Word.

Let us not forget the sacrifice you made for us.

May we go forward and live our daily lives so that this sacrifice will not have been in vain. Amen.

Lucille Hylton

FRIDAY – FEBRUARY 15TH

Mark 2:15-17

If the dinner table Jesus and the sinners ate at was in a Chinese Buffet, my seat would be near the sweet and sour chicken. I've been there for a while, though sometimes I've left my seat for more rice, or egg rolls, or whatever. But I have come back. Maybe we're all at the table. That's the point, isn't it? We all continue to sin, and we all continue to make mistakes. Some of us leave the table for extra helpings, perhaps filled with confidence in our choices. But we do come back, eventually. And it's reassuring to know Jesus has been there all along, and He isn't getting up for seconds.

Thank you Lord for this day and every day. Thank you for being with me. Please help me to be a better person, and please forgive me for my sins. Thank you, Jesus, in your name I pray, amen.

Jason Williams

SATURDAY - FEBRUARY 16TH

Mark 2:23-3:6

The Work of the Sabbath

“The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath...” (Mark 2:28)

So here's Jesus wandering around Galilee . . . teaching in the synagogue . . . cleansing a man of an unclean spirit . . . healing Mary, and a leper, and a paralytic . . . bidding fisherman to follow him . . . eating with sinners. He's quite an attraction. The crowds are enthralled at the One who seems so human yet so divine. And then on the Sabbath he goes and ignores Jewish law. He actually plucks some grain because he and his companions are hungry, and then goes into the temple and cures a man with a withered hand. Doesn't he know the commandment to *remember the Sabbath and keep it holy*? Doesn't he know that the Pharisees are watching, just waiting for the opportunity to do him in? Yet his response is to grieve at the hard hearts of the Pharisees and to meet human need in the moment it is presented to him – Sabbath or not.