

Devotional Commentary on the Lenten Readings for Week 1

Lent Theme: Healed and Transformed by Grace to Re-imagine the New Church

Weekly Theme: Transformed by Grace through Repentance

Overview of the Week

The week calls us to walk humbly reflecting on our lives as they are, the mistakes we have done and all that we have done that has not reflected God's love through us. We do this because God wants us to be transformed and is ready to forgive us our sins. Repentance by nature is to take a complete turn from what one has been doing. It is a choice different from the choices we have made in the past. It is choosing as God would want us to choose. This may bring vulnerability on our side, and yes, transformation requires exactly that. Pride and resistance can only lead to more rebellion of the soul, mind and heart.

Day 1:

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5: 20b – 6:10 and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Joel on this day points out that we are active participants in God's act of transforming our lives. It is us who need to open our hearts to God's work of grace. The journey begins by us being called to acknowledge the wrongs we have done, then hear God's call for us to return to Him as a God who wants to reconcile with you. There are several ways in which we can do this – fasting as Isaiah points out what this means, that our beliefs and actions need to go together. We need to fast our unhelpful ways of doing life. Any religious practice that does transform the mind, heart, leaves the soul still yearning for God's love. We also need to lament not for any other, but self to begin with as we hear the example of the Psalmist in Psalm 51 – we need to confess our sins. Pay special attention to verse 6. Such a journey requires endurance and is not an easy way out of the past.

Day 2:

Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:1-14 and 1 John 1:3-10

The theme of repentance goes hand in hand with God's forgiveness. In essence we can trust God and take Him at His word. God loves us beyond the sin we have committed. If we put our soul in God, we can then live as God wants us to. This is the call made by Daniel in his prayer of confession for the whole nation. The preamble is how faithful God is to His word. God has made a covenant to love us with steadfast love. This love is meant for you as well so that we can be in fellowship with the father as the Epistle of John tells us for God is light. May you walk with this light in this light in fellowship with One we can trust with our lives today and forever.

Day 3:

Psalm 25:1-10; Daniel 9:15-25a and 2 Timothy 4:1-5

The theme of God's love continues today and we can long for such love and pray for it. Notice how the Scripture readings for today are similar to the previous day and yet take us further from yesterday. It is amazing once we become aware of our needs, we can commit to meeting such needs. Daniel remembers the need for Israel to be freed from Egypt. Paul charges Timothy to be fervent in ministry. We risk not experiencing God's love if we are not serious about the things that bring love. The more we practice these ways of love, the more love flourishes. According to Paul the popular culture becomes the culture of the day. Repentance around us can thus happen through our own repentance. What new culture do you want to bring forth for the world to embrace this week?

Day 4:

Psalm 25:1-10; Psalm 32 and Matthew 9:2-13

The love of God today is in us responding well to it. We can be easily trapped in the past and lack the courage to break away from it. The Psalmist reminds us of this great danger. Once we have been touched by God's love, we need to have the courage to live differently. No wonder, Jesus insists that the knowledge of the paralysed man that his sins are forgiven is not enough, but needs to live as someone who is forgiven, hence verse 5. Also notice Matthew the tax collector is called from robbing people of their income to enriching people with the good news. The world may know you as a sinner, Jesus wants to dine with you for we belong to Him as our future and not the sin of our past. Acknowledge therefore that a physician has come into your life - you are healed of your past, continue to live differently.

Day 5:

Psalm 77; Job 4:1-21 and Ephesians 2:1-10

The theme of soul searching comes back just in case we had become complacent and not realized our lives are being influenced everyday and not necessarily in the manner in which God wants us to live. The Psalmist together with Job remind us of this truth. The questions asked by Eliphaz are critical in reminding us that we sin everyday between morning and evening and therefore we need God's grace. The day offers us a critical view to living by imitating Christ. Let our values be not just about us, but others too. This way of living opens us up to being a blessing to others, thereby sinning less and less. Our values change when inspired and influenced by Christ. How can Jesus influence you this week on the things you have done in the past?

Day 6:

Psalm 77; Job 5:8-27 and 1 Peter 3: 8-18a

The accusations made by Eliphaz about Job seem to have taken root in Job's heart as Job turns to God in anger and frustration in Job 5:1. The words from verse 8 are not clear whether coming from God directly or not, but are very clear to be putting things into perspective. God does not hesitate to offer guidance and helpful perspective. At times repentance comes through counselling. Our wisdom falls short of being supreme and perfect. We need to listen carefully to other perspectives. This notion runs through even in 1 Peter 3:8-18a.