

## Adam's Reflections: March 2019

### March 7

Last night at John Wesley Pastor Forney reminded us to keep it simple and get real. What a great reminder moving into the Lenten season. Life is often complicated, lots of moving pieces that comprise an ordinary day, multiple threads that sometimes pull us in a variety of ways. Very few of us have had existences that are so singularly focused that we don't at times lose sight of the central narrative.

Lent serves as a reminder to bring things back to the core of who we are, or maybe who we should be. It is no coincidence that on Ash Wednesday we start Lent by reverting to the simplest understanding of who we are. The liturgy for the imposition of ashes, suggests the following words. "Remember, that you are dust, and to dust you shall return". It places us with God in the garden, created from the dust of the earth. It places us with language of toiling in the soil as we depart the garden. It hearkens to the words around a grave, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust". It is imagery that shows us that we are mortal, drawing breath for a fleeting time, reminding us that our days are numbered and focus on the important things is necessary.

It also raises the question about what is truly important. We in the church can and have spent massive amounts of energy on things that might not be important. The proverbial argument about the color of the carpet can be a stand in for any number of things we focus our attention on. Not that these are all insignificant details but are they really where we need to spend all of our energy. Lent reminds us that we do need to attend to our relationship with God. The Ash Wednesday service concluded with a confession of sin and passing the peace. Acknowledging that we fail to be who God desires us to be and then doing the work of restoration. I could use General Conference as an example of where we need to practice this, but that is just recency bias. We always need this Lenten focus! We always need to assess our own shortcomings. We always need to work at restoring relationships with God, with our own selves and with each other. Lent gives us this focus. I invite you through these forty days to join me in doing that work. Join me at the altar rail on Sunday, either in body or spirit, join me in the ongoing work of discipline and discipleship. Let us have together a Lent that renews our souls for the work of the Kingdom.

### March 14

#### [Genesis 15](#)

This passage in Genesis is one of the Old Testament stories of covenant. God making an agreement with a person or people so that they may be in relationship. In our current context we often enter into formal relationships with others, even if we don't give it much thought. We borrow money from the bank, we buy insurance policies, we make reservations for vacations, we use our credit card at the gas station. All of these are binding actions where we agree to do something in exchange for something else. There is an certain amount of trust involved with each of those transactions.

There is also a certain amount of risk. What if our insurance claim is denied? What if we don't repay our loan? What if the hotel double books our room? Our need to trust the other party in the transaction is necessary, even if we attempt to mitigate the risk with lots of fine print, there is still a level of trust. God's covenants are sometimes like that. God brings Abram out of his tent in the dark of the night and shows him the spaciousness of the sky and compares the heavens to the offspring he will be unable to count. This comes in response to Abram's complaint that he is old and has no heir. Abram looks and see's God promise and believes. He gives God his trust.

That same promise is available to us as well. Trust, or better yet, faith in Jesus Christ leads to the promise that God will care for us. The Genesis text reminds us of this and our Luke text for Sunday will also remind us of God's desire for that relationship. Lent is a time for renewal and repentance and the beginning steps of that renewal start with remembering what God desires for us.

## **March 21**

Almighty God...We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings...

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us we pray.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone...We are truly sorry and we humbly repent...

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done..

I am sorry...

We have and will touch on many themes during Lent, this year, years past and years to come, but through all of that the idea of being repentant will always be a part of this season. None of us are perfect. We do and say things that are insensitive, unkind and harmful. We fail to do things that reflect God's love. We hold onto our biases and misguided habits in ways that are unhealthy. We fail to be worthy of God's love.

It is not necessary or maybe even healthy to dwell on these failing all the time, but from time to time, and during Lent especially it is good for us to take a more humble posture and acknowledge our sins. To repent of our wrong doing and continue the work of being better.