

BEYOND FASTING: 10 tips for a more meaningful Lent

A UMC.org feature by Joe Iovino

Lent is a time for self-reflection and deepening one's relationship with God in Jesus Christ. For many this season leading up to Easter will be weeks of giving up something they enjoy as a sign of contrition for mistakes they have made. Others will spend extra time in devotions and prayer, while a few more will carry a cross or nail in their pocked as a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus made for them and the world. If those practices work for you, wonderful! Others may want to find different ways of observing this holy season. Consider adopting one or more of the following creative uses of the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.

Giving up something for Lent isn't the only way to observe the season. Here are 10 creative alternatives:

1. Apologize to someone.

Lent is a season of repentance. Most often we think of asking God for forgiveness from our sin, but that is only half of the story. Most sins include hurting others, which mattered to Jesus. He taught that if during worship you "remember that your brother or sister has something against you...First make things right with your brother or sister then come back and offer your gift." (Matt. 5:23-24 CEB) Lent is a great time to seek forgiveness from those we have harmed.

2. Perform random acts of kindness.

Express your love for Jesus by loving others. Pay for the order of the person behind you in the drive-through. Give an extravagant tip. Carry gift cards to give away. Ask others how they are doing, then stop and listen to their response. Share the love of Jesus in any way you can think of each day during Lent.

3. Delve into a book of the Bible.

Enhance your devotions by getting to know a book of the Bible well. Read it repeatedly, at least once in a single setting. Find articles about it. Meditate on it with a commentary. Memorize parts of it. Pray through it. Google sermons about it. Find hymns based on it. In the six weeks of Lent, you could develop a deep understanding of a book of the Bible about which you have been curious.

4. Serve people in need

Identify an organization which you would like to participate. Sign up and get trained. Then volunteer to serve throughout the season of Lent. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the Last Supper, he taught that we are called not to be served, but to serve. (John 13:1-17)

5. Visit the lonely

Jesus also taught his disciples to treat others as we would treat him. This includes those who are sick and in prison (Matt 25:31-36). Talk to a local nursing home about washing wheelchairs, or a children's hospital about visiting with parents of patients. Volunteer with a prison ministry, senior center, or any other place where people need some human contact. Play games, tell stories, look at photo albums, and enjoy those about whom Jesus said, "when you have done it for (them), you have done it for me."

6. Read Wesley's sermons about the Sermon on the Mount.

These 13 sermons (available online) are central to the message of John Wesley. They make up a little more than one-quarter of the fifty "Standard Sermons" he gave to his Methodist lay preachers to teach them "the essentials of true religion" (The Sermons of John Wesley-An Introduction"). Reading these sermons will have you focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and give you a sense of what it means to be a United Methodist in the tradition of John Wesley.

7. Tell others you love them

Some of us struggle to say those three little words. Maybe we assume others already know how we feel. Maybe we think we show our love and don't need to say it. Or maybe we are concerned it won't be reciprocated. Fight the fear and say "I love you" to friends, family members, and everyone else you love at least once during the season.

8. Throw a party for someone

Jesus often used the image of a party to describe the Kingdom of God. He talked about wedding receptions and banquet feasts, and participated in several large group celebrations. Host your own Kingdom party by cooking for the neighborhood, or buying lunch for the entire office of your church. Feed everyone you can and give people an opportunity to be together.

9. Serve in worship

Your church needs you. Sing in the choir, usher, serve as a reader, work with the tech team, help a young family with their baby, or find some other way to serve your church. Don't wait for someone to ask you to use your God-given gifts. Offer yourself in service to your church for the season.

10. Say 'thank you'

Parents, family members, mentors, coaches, teachers, authors, pastors, Sunday school teachers, and others have shaped you into the person you are. Each week during Lent, send a note of gratitude to one of them. Tell them how much they meant to you and how they inspired you. Consider including a small gift. Even if you do not know that author or speaker personally, draft and email of thanks.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Church news.....	2
Think on this: Dead Faith.....	3
Puzzle.....	4

To submit to the Newsletter:

Contact Janet Amundson @ janetramundson@aol.com or call:

(765)744-0852) Or put your information in the box in the hallway in the Fellowship Hall Please help keep the Newsletter going by adding your submission!

To receive newsletter electronically in full color in your email, please submit your email address to Janet as well!



MARCH BIRTHDAYS!

- 5th Marsha Goodhew
- 11th Becky Harlow
- 25th Katie Current
- 26th Alyssa Retter
- 31st Jearl Weddle



On Going Events:

- 1pm each Monday: **Grown up Coloring Party**
- 2pm each Wednesday **Willing Workers knit/crochet**
- 6:30 each Wednesday: **Bible Study**
- **Third Sunday each month worship: Jimmy Riddle will sing!**
- **Every Friday night: Friday Night Friendzee@ Redkey Youth Center 6-8pm**
- **6pm third Tuesday of each month: Fairview Woman's Guardian Angels meeting at 6pm.**



EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES:

- Sunrise Service at 7am
- 8-9 Coffee and Donuts!
- 9:15 Regular Service
- 10:45 Easter Egg Hunt



After church on Easter Sunday! Join in the fun of watching the kids look for Easter Eggs! Bring the little ones!

Reduce Stress By Choosing Calming Colors!
 Studies show that colors have a real effect on your stress levels! The book *Managing Stress from Morning to Night* shows this report:
 ⇒ The body is less stimulated by black than any other color.
 ⇒ Blue may elevate your mood.
 ⇒ Brown is calming
 ⇒ Green actually may increase stress levels.
 ⇒ Red is an arousing, stimulating color.
 ⇒ Yellow reduces boredom!

Well Color me informed!



The Taxi Driver and St. Peter:

One Easter a priest and a taxi driver both died and went to heaven. St. Peter was at the Pearly gates waiting for them.



'Come with me,' said St. Peter to the taxi driver.

The taxi driver did as he was told and followed St Peter to a mansion. It had everything you could imagine from a bowling alley to an Olympic size pool.

'Oh my word, thank you,' said the taxi driver.

Next, St. Peter led the priest to a rough old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television set.

'Wait, I think you are a little mixed up,' said the priest. 'Shouldn't I be the one who gets the mansion? After all I was a priest, went to church every day, and preached God's word.'

'Yes, that's true.' St Peter rejoined, 'But during your Easter sermons people slept. When the taxi driver drove, everyone prayed.'

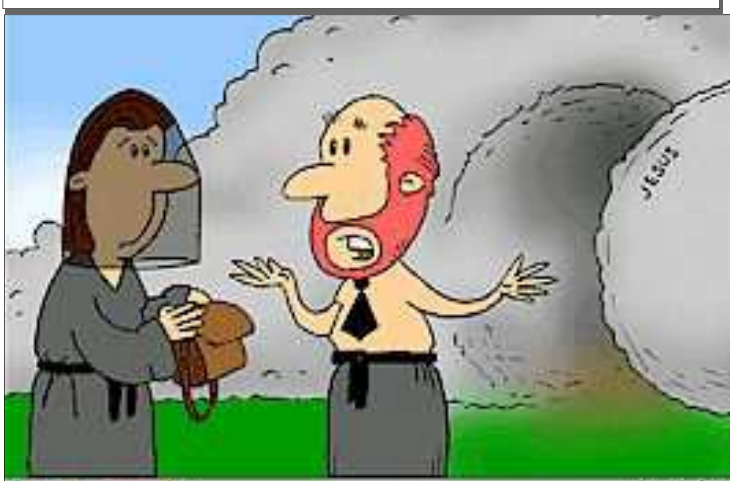
Showing:

Amazing Grace
March 18th 6:30Pm
Fellowship Hall



Based on the true story of William Wilberforce played by *Ioan Grufford*.

Amazing Grace follow his courageous quest to end the British slave trade. Although he faces intense opposition from the Parliament his minister, John Newton played by *Albert Finney* and whom penned the song "Amazing Grace" urges him to see the course through..



I'm sorry Maam, the resurrection of Jesus was a miracle. Not a service of this cemetery!

You Were in His Prayers:

"Then Jesus went about a stone's throw away from them, He knelt down and prayed." Luke 22:41

The final prayer of Jesus was about you. His final pain was for you. His final passion was for you. Before he went to the cross, Jesus went to the garden. And when he spoke with his Father, you were in his prayers...

And God couldn't turn his back on you. He couldn't because he saw you, and one look at you was all it took to convince him. Right there in the middle of a world which isn't fair. He saw you cast into a river of life you didn't request. He saw you betrayed by those you love. He saw you with a body which gets sick with a heart which grows weak...

On the eve of the cross, Jesus made his decision. He would rather go to hell for you than go to heaven without you.

From Max Lucado's

"And the Angels Were Silent"

I am very aware that nothing I myself could possibly do, could grant me salvation and eternal life. Nor is it at all conceivably possible that the salvation of any other person could come from me, I am no one. I have no powers, no hope at all aside from Jesus Christ. Our salvation comes only from Jesus Christ. ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,” Eph 2:8 (ESV)*** It is only by calling upon the name of Jesus, believing in Jesus that our salvation rests. ***“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12 (ESV)*** Therefore, being only human, we are powerless to save ourselves or anyone else for that matter. However, is faith alone all that we need to have? Can we just one day wake up and say: “I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and then continue on in our sinful ways? NO! Of course not. But some think so, some think that faith alone is all one needs to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But even the demons believe that Jesus is Lord.

Even those that do evil can still ‘believe’ that Jesus is Lord, but they have not accepted him as *their* Lord. They may still serve another god, a false god. The demons served Satan, yet they knew who Jesus was, they knew he was Lord.

Let’s examine what the scripture tells us about faith alone:

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” James 2:14-26 (ESV)

Did you read that? *REALLY* read that? Faith, without works...IS DEAD. Some may be thinking; “how can that be, I thought all I had to do to receive salvation is to believe?” Well, yes...we do have to believe. But the word also tells us to be ‘like’ Jesus, to imitate him! He came to serve, therefore should also serve. We are told to serve one another, to become servants as he was a servant and by serving one another is that not putting the ‘works’ in our ‘faith’?

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13 (ESV)

So you see, faith without works is indeed, dead faith. Faith is meant to be shared, utilized. Isn’t that the truth with all types of ‘love’. Having faith in Christ, is loving him. Words alone do not express true love. You can tell someone you love them 100 times a day but without works, without showing them that love, it means nothing. It is the same with faith. Faith without works, it is dead faith. It doesn’t ‘go’ anywhere, it doesn’t ‘do’ anything, it isn’t ‘shared’ with others. As disciples, we are told to ‘go’ into the world, ‘tell’ everyone about Jesus, ‘share’ the gospel of Christ! Action words! Go, tell, do, share...and yes, even love. These are words of action, words of ‘work’ as you go about the action of doing, telling and sharing, you are then ‘putting’ (another action word) your FAITH into WORKS! That makes it a LIVE Faith, not a DEAD faith!

Dead faith brings to mind that of the church of Laodicea in ***Rev. 3: 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.”*** That is a passive church. One that sits on their laurels and thinks that faith alone is good enough. Remember what the Word says will happen to that church? God will spew them out of his mouth, they are disgusting to him. People, we need to “work” our faith so it doesn’t become a dead faith! Keep your faith alive by putting it into action!

Until next month,

Janet

Did You Know?

- ⇒ Isaiah chapter 53 gives astonishing details about the death of Jesus. The servant is pierced and wounded, taken away by oppression and led as a lamb to slaughter. His grave is ‘with the rich’.
- ⇒ When Jesus told Peter and John to prepare for the Passover meal, they were to look out for a man carrying a jar of water. This was a prearranged secret sign. Carrying water was woman’s work, so men very rarely carried a jar of water.
- ⇒ The Roman writer, Cicero wrote, “Crucifixion is indeed one of the most abdominal torments that the very inventive genius of torture has imagined.”
- ⇒ It was unusual for the body of a criminal to be buried. They were left for the dogs and vultures to eat.
- ⇒ The wine mixed with myrrh which was offered to Jesus, which he declined (Mark 15:23) was a narcotic drink. According to the Babylonian Talmud, kind ladies from Jerusalem provided this drink to numb the senses of the victim of crucifixion.
- ⇒ The word ‘paradise’ comes from a Persian word meaning “a walled garden.” In Persia, it was a special honor to be invited to walk in the garden with the king.
- ⇒ The Song of Songs is often interpreted as a devotional allegory in praise of the love of God and his people. Alternatively, it may be seen as a parable which by celebrating human love, points beyond itself to the love of God.

FAITH
 is like Wi-Fi,
 it’s invisible but
 it has the power
 to connect you to
 what you need.

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LUKE 24:1-14

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.