



DAILY LENTEN DEVOTIONS

Congregational Church of Naugatuck
Lent 2010

**Schedule of Lenten Worship and Devotion
at the Congregation Church of Naugatuck**

Wednesday, February 17 – 7 p.m. – Ash Wednesday Service

Sunday, February 21 – 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Sunday morning worship/The Rev. Gordon Rankin Preaching

Wednesday, February 24 – 6:30-8:00 p.m. – Lenten Series: “In Another’s Shoes” (Intergenerational evening including pot luck dinner).

Sunday, February 28 – 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Sunday morning worship/Mr. Fredd Ward preaching.

Wednesday, March 3 – 7- 8 p.m. – Lenten Series: “In Another’s Shoes”

Sunday, March 7 – 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Sunday morning worship/Youth Sunday

Wednesday, March 10 – 7- 8 p.m. – Lenten Series: “In Another’s Shoes”

Sunday, March 14 – 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Sunday morning worship/the Rev. Gordon Rankin preaching

Wednesday, March 17 – 7- 8 p.m. – Lenten Series: “In Another’s Shoes”

Sunday, March 21 – 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Sunday morning worship/Drum Circle presentation of the raising of Lazarus

Wednesday, March 24 – 6:30-8:00 p.m. - Lenten Series: “In Another’s Shoes” (Cultural Awareness Meal – intergenerational prepared meal, cost \$1 per person)

Sunday, March 28 – 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Palm Sunday Worship/the Rev. Gordon Rankin preaching

Thursday, April 1 – 5:30 p.m. – Seder Meal; 7:30 p.m. – Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service

Friday, April 2 - 7:30 p.m. – Good Friday Service of Meditation and Prayer.

Sunday, April 4 – 6:30 a.m. - Easter Sunrise Service on the Naugatuck Green; 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Easter Festival Services/Mr. Fredd Ward preaching.

Wednesday, February 17, 2010 (Ash Wednesday)

Written by Fredd Ward

Scripture: Luke 4: 1-13

Jesus was not observing Lent during the wilderness encounter in Luke's gospel. Lent is an invention of the modern church. A long time ago, someone got the idea that Christians needed to be reminded that religion is not a spectator sport. So, Lent was instituted to remind us that we have to *get involved* with our own salvation.

It is necessary to set aside time (a season) to pray and reflect. It's necessary to turn our attention away from the indulgent side of life and turn inward to look honestly at our inner selves. Lent is a pre-Spring Spring-cleaning of the soul. And, yes, some people give up various comforts during the forty days of Lent and try with a will to be faithful to those commitments. These sacrifices can draw us into the experience that Jesus had – the universal human experience of temptation. To be like Jesus is not to be incapable of wrongdoing but to avoid it.

Prayer: Jesus, I pray to be an active participant in my own salvation during this Lenten season by avoiding “sin” in its many forms. Grant that I may be divinely inspired and yet fully human. Amen

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Written by Rich Smilo

Scripture: Luke 4: 31 – 44

These portions of Luke's gospel show how Jesus' wider ministry started. Some of the first healings our Lord performed were to cast out demons and spirits. For the possessed in the synagogue and at Simon's house recognized Jesus for who and what he was: the Son of God. This notion of recognition is important. It starts the folk of the region to thinking that there is more to Jesus than just being a gifted teacher and prophet, that his words and now his deeds come from a higher plane where he has the authority to do. This observation was not willing or forthright. There is fear and disbelief along with joy and awe in equal measure.

As this passage draws to a close and as he finishes a day of teaching, the crowd does not wish for him to leave. Here he says: ” I must go and spread the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” This simple statement sets the stage for all that follows. All the way to the Cross and his sacrifice for us all.

Prayer: Holy Father, you have sent your Son, Jesus, among us to teach us of your Kingdom; but we whisper among ourselves and do not believe. Let our disbelief be as demons that are cast out by Him with a word and open our hearts and minds to recognize and embrace His true nature. We humbly pray to You in his Name. Amen

Friday, February 19, 2010
Written by Barbara Madden

Scripture: Luke 5: 1-11

The story begins at a crowded beach, two empty fish boats and fisherman washing their nets, Jesus appears, climbs into one of the boats – the boat belonging to Simon Peter. He tells Peter to go out a short bit and from there he teaches the multitude. Jesus then tells Peter to take the boat out into the deep sea and there throw their nets. Peter was reluctant because as he saw that they had been fishing all night and all day – were tired, etc. – however, he added that if Jesus wanted them to go it was ok – The story continues with a fantastic catch – so much fish that the boat began to sink. Peter called the other boat and they filled it also – the nets were ready to break and all of the fisherman became fearful and Peter pleaded with Jesus to leave them – but Jesus responded very calmly and told Peter not to fear as he and the other fisherman would no longer have to catch fish as now they would be catching people. When they landed they followed Jesus, leaving behind home and family.

When one does use prayer in making decisions it helps us and there is no need to fear the outcome if we trust, listen and respond with obedience to the will of God, we will be just fine and we will be rewarded with a new life. If we really believe and follow the will of God, something good does happen.

Prayer: Holy and loving God, help me to listen to your word. Help me to believe in the truth of your word, to follow your command in spite of my fears and reluctance, because by listening and believing and following, I will be rewarded with a new life.

Saturday February 20, 2010

Written by Kim Sherwood

Scripture: Luke 5: 17 - 26

My first thought after reading this scripture is who were these 4 men carrying the cripple? Were they family, friends, or strangers maybe, who found this cripple laying on the street? Were they 4 men who did not know each other at all, but maybe 4 men who had been previous recipients of Jesus' healing, and whom were spreading God's grace by doing this act? Whoever they were, they cared enough to brave the crowds, to climb to the roof, take off the roof, and bring the cripple in.

But I also wonder what sins the cripple had – none are ever mentioned. So why did Jesus even forgive him of his sins before healing him? The way I read the story, the only reason the men brought the cripple to Jesus was to heal him. Everyone is standing around, waiting for Jesus to perform a miracle, and what does he do? He forgives the man of his sins. Is this a lesson for those around him - that if a simple man can forgive and have it in his heart to forgive someone who he does not know, why can't we all see the good in others? Or was he trying to prove himself that day? Was Jesus showing all the Pharisees and scribes that day that if he could make the man walk, then he was able to forgive him of his sins as well, so he forgave him his sins first?

Jesus heals the cripple. The man can walk. I think the fact that he healed the crippled man, and then said "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk home", and the cripple did just that, Jesus knew something would come of this. He healed the man physically, but also freed him of his sins. He knew that this was going to lead the liberated cripple to bring another person to be healed, regardless of the healing that is needed. This is how God's grace works. God knows this, and the cycle repeats itself until there is no one else to help. When this happens, God's work will be done forever, but to this day we still are trying to deliver the last crippled man albeit physical, emotional or mental to God, to be forgiven, to go out and make someone else's life easier, to spread God's grace.

Prayer: Lord, let us not be paralyzed people, afraid to spread your word. Rather, bless us with the strength and faith that the four men who carried the cripple had. Give us the strength to continue your good works in our daily lives. Amen

Sunday February 21, 2010

Written by John Rodgers

Scripture: Luke 5: 33-39

This verse is not so easy for *me* to figure out. The story is about Jesus being questioned as to why His disciples do not fast like others. His answer comes in two parts. Jesus first relates his relationship with them as wedding guests with Himself as the Bridegroom. To me He is stating that fasting is something that is done to prepare for a special event, or to cleanse oneself in a sorrowful period of mourning. As Jesus is among them, it is not the time for fasting, but a time for celebration. This speaks to living life to the fullest, expressing gratitude for the abundance of gifts being shared, and being filled with the Joy of the knowledge of Truth and Love.

The next part of the explanation compares old & new clothing, old & new wineskins & wine. I can only speculate that Jesus' intention was to illustrate: once we are filled with the understanding of what is new and just, the old ways no longer serve. It seems to be connected to the verse about not serving two masters. In other words; there's no going back. As soon as the light is shone, there is no need to live in darkness, nor does it serve us any longer!

Prayer:

Today I give thanks for the life affirming message of Jesus The Christ. I celebrate with joy and elation the Good News of Gods' never ending love for all that has been created. Turning from the ways of confusion and pain, I embrace the joy of Love & Unity. Looking forward I renounce the old and bask in the new life of forgiveness, acceptance Grace & peace. What was once lost; is found, what was broken; made whole, and what has been yearned for; fulfilled. This is the day that the Lord has made, let us be glad & rejoice.