

Message from Pastor Roy

Drawing near to the season of Lent, our tradition invites us to take on a spiritual discipline such as fasting (“giving something up”), or some other kind of action to focus our attention on and listen to God. As we consider a Lenten discipline, we might feel a sense of dread arising within us. What if we don’t follow through? What if we are disappointed? Or, what if our experience leads us into something new? This is often the case when we try something new. (Be courageous.)

Ultimately, any Lenten practice is about prayer. Listening, opening, waiting—not that this is in any way simple or easy. For as we pray, our mind becomes distracted with past regrets, “to do lists,” as well as other “shoulds” and “oughts.” Prayer brings back memories—“good” and “bad.” In time and at times, we find ourselves wondering if it is even possible to pray.

Yes, prayer requires effort to give up our busyness, entertainment, and distraction for a few moments; for prayer, like conversation, requires listening. If we set aside the busyness for even small bits of stillness, we slowly, with patience, begin to hear a new voice. The voice comes quietly—so easily crowded out. But with time and practice, the voice comes with greater clarity.

Writing in a journal (possible Lenten practice.) can be helpful for sorting out our experience of prayer. We might, in a journal, recall our efforts to live out the call of God in our lives. We might write down questions which arise in prayer. “Does my concern for what others think of me get in the way of my ability to love them? How does God love me through the people who are close to me? How does God speak to me through creation? Where do I most experience the mercy of God? How do past experiences affect my ability to imagine how love and peace are working all around me? How is God speaking through my friends (or family)?”

Prayer is less a matter of thinking the right thoughts and more of allowing the Spirit to commune with us as we allow barriers to fall. We cannot force ourselves to feel mercy or love, but prayer can open us to these realities. Lent is an invitation to make space for God’s peace, God’s hope, not simply for us, but for those all around us. A blessed and adventuresome Lent to you all.

Pastor Roy