

Introduction

It is so nice at this time of year. Winter is receding and the days are getting longer. A bit more light, a bit more bird song, and Lent.

(Have you had your pancakes yet?)

The word Lent comes from the idea of lengthening days. The anticipation for a good summer is building. But we're not there yet. During this period we remember when Jesus was about to start his public "career" but wasn't there yet. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote about Jesus praying, fasting, and resisting temptation in the desert for forty days.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (Matthew 4:1-2)

After Jesus prayed, fasted, and resisted the devil His amazing public life began.

How about you? Do you use prayer to stay strong? Have you ever felt God ask you to give something up? What tempts you most? How do you feel about the things you are asked to do "in public?"

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
You know how much we need You, even when we work hard to appear strong to others. You know the areas of our lives in which You would like us to grow. Please guide us and draw near to each one of us now by Your Holy Spirit.

I am sorry for doing things I know You don't like. Please forgive me. I turn away from them, and turn to You afresh.

Thank You Jesus for being a brilliant example and our ultimate helper.

Hymn

All to Jesus I surrender
All to Him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him
In His presence daily live

*I surrender all, I surrender all
All to You, my blessed Saviour
I surrender all
All to You, my blessed Saviour
I surrender all*

All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Saviour, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender
Only at Your feet I bow
Worldly pleasures all forsaken
Fill me with Your love and power

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Now I feel the sacred flame.
Oh, the joy of full salvation!
Glory, glory to His name!

Reflection

I spoke to a resident in a care home last year who told me a brilliant story. For a while they had begun to feel God asking them to give up things that distracted them from prayer and from friendship with God. They knew straight away that they wanted to get rid of their TV set. So when the maintenance man next passed by their door the resident asked for their TV set to be removed. The maintenance guy said "sure," walked right in, unplugged it there and then, and carried it away. The resident chuckled about the speed at which this had all happened. The result was that they did feel less distracted and more focused on their friendship with God.

I found this story so encouraging and so challenging. It reminded me of a very short story that Jesus told:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

(Matthew 13:45-46)

Also challenging!

The amazing thing about Jesus is that he always has more to give of himself to you. Jesus wants relationship. Right now. Always. Jesus is ever-ready to spend time with you, always thinking about you, always praying for you. (Romans 8:34!)

What might you need to give up in order to spend more time with Jesus?

A thousand things spring to mind for me!

Prayer

Dear God,

Wonderful, living, relationship-ready,
unique person.

I am available to You,
yes to more,

Thank You for every good gift,
yours,
Me



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