

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

- Luke 9:51

The season of Lent provides us with an opportunity to take this journey with Jesus as he heads to the cross that awaited him in Jerusalem. Beginning today, with Ash Wednesday, the forty-day season of Lent begins. (Sundays are not counted as part of Lent as they are resurrection celebrations held throughout the season.) As a church, we are taking this journey together through forty readings from the Gospel of Luke, which were recently delivered to your door, and are also available on our website under the tab “Lenten Resources” (www.fccoe.org).

Lent is a journey of spiritual preparation and renewal. We might think of it as a new Exodus journey, from the slavery of sin into the freedom of a new Promised Land, or as a return from exile to our true home in Jesus. In our pain-adverse culture, Lent stands apart by not shrinking away from suffering but cultivating in us the wisdom that growth often only comes through suffering. Lent calls us to say “no” to ourselves in order to experience a greater “yes” as we walk with Jesus. Lent prepares us to celebrate the joy of resurrection by first recognizing the reality of the cross and depth of our sin that pinned Jesus there.

As we ponder the self-sacrifice of Jesus, engaging in some sort of service to others can help to bring this great love of Jesus for us, and for the world, into sharper focus. Certainly, there are many in these days who are struggling in some way, from financial and physical distress, to simply needing someone to talk to in order to fend off feelings of fear or frustration. Would you ask God to open your eyes, and your heart, that you might be able to offer yourself in some way in the coming weeks?

Grace & Peace, Pastor Tim