
About Lent and Easter 2023

This Season of Lent begins in the wilderness, a place that feels both familiar and dreaded after the recent pandemic. While we might emphasize the loneliness and desolation of the wilderness, wilderness times are not just empty and barren. Just as a wilderness can be teeming with life, our wilderness times can also surprise us with the life they hold. Our lives can also feel clarifying and renewed as we find within ourselves new awareness.

We begin in the familiar landscape of the wilderness with the tempter's questions to Jesus. That growing awareness shifts from Jesus to Nicodemus' assurance of God's deep care and self-giving love in the winds of change and new birth. We continue to find a new awareness of ourselves in the questions asked of and by the Samaritan woman and by the one born blind in the gospel of John. If we didn't notice it before, we begin to notice that there are companions in the wilderness who encourage our survival.

Just before we enter Jerusalem on a road paved with branches and cloaks, we find ourselves in the wilderness of grief, asking harrowing questions of God and ourselves. At that tomb, we hear a call to unbind each other. No one asks these questions alone, but we share in the dream of what new life will be after all that has happened.

It is vision and hope that we join the chorus of voices that cry for justice on Palm/Passion Sunday. Here, we realize how much we have changed and continue the transformation into the great 50 days of Easter.

Easter arrives dressed in white and gold and a flurry of Alleluias. It is a feast for our senses when Mary becomes the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Thomas uses his hands to proclaim his faith, and two see the risen Christ when bread is broken and shared. We come into our senses as we consider life that continues beyond the tomb, beyond doubt, beyond trials.

In stories from the Acts of the Apostles and the early Christian church, we reflect on what brings life, what it means to live in community and the cost and risk of proclaiming the truth of God. We find new meaning in what it is that we believe and find strength in the prayer of Jesus for all disciples as we continue the Christ-life.

The great 50 days culminate in celebration as we experience, with the first followers, the life-giving work of the Spirit.



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