



**Redeemer Lutheran Church of Leisure World and
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Worship and Discipleship by Margo Geesing
“Rest, Transformation and the Lenten Journey”

The first Sunday in February Jesus just wants a little down / alone time but was hard pressed to get it. He has spent the day first preaching in the synagogue (with authority), then goes to Simon’s house for a little food. But first, he cures Simon’s mother-in-law so she can deal with the guests in the house. But it doesn’t end there, people keep bringing others that Jesus needs to heal and cure and drive out demons from. It’s been a full day. Rather than sleeping in, he gets up early so he can have a few minutes to himself and pray. But, of course, his disciple’s go hunting for him. I am sure we can all relate to the level of exasperation Jesus felt. If you ever had to deal with a small child – you know how he felt! Even if you haven’t, there are those times when you have given your all to everyone else and you need to rest and recharge; but there’s just – one – more – thing/person – that – needs – your – attention. And you take that deep breath, and continue on. We do need to be sure to take time to care for ourselves: pray, sleep, relax, do something fun; but, like Jesus, we also need to take that deep breath and continue the faith journey.

Second Sunday of February is Transfiguration of Our Lord. We began the time after Epiphany with the Baptism of Jesus and end it with the Transfiguration of Jesus. The presence of the Trinity on both occasions includes the Father claiming Jesus as His own and giving us directions: to listen this time! How did Peter, James, and John react? Fear but wanting to stay on the mountain. To dwell here. Instead, Jesus brings them down the mountain and tells them not to speak of what happened – until after the resurrection. This is one of the issues when you decide to become a follower of Jesus – what we want to do verses what Jesus want you to do. The “yes” to follow the call comes with a price: usually involving pain and sacrifice but definitely fear and confusion. We don’t get to hang out on the mountain top with God; we have to go down and deal with the nitty-gritty of reality and people.

February 14 is Ash Wednesday. Jesus gives us the guidelines for what we will be working on during this Lent (and hopefully beyond). It is our annual call to alms giving, prayer, and fasting. This year, as we dedicate ourselves to those Lenten practices again, instead of giving up something maybe we should look at DOING something MORE. Perhaps you are able to go for a walk in your neighborhood and you can take the time to smile and say hello to people you haven’t seen in a while. Maybe you can make that phone call or send an email or letter to someone else who might be lonely and needs a friendly voice. Maybe you can choose to listen to someone who needs an ear. Or share a meal with another. Alms giving isn’t just about sharing your wealth but also sharing yourself. Sharing your time and talents, too. Take

time to pray. Connect with God. But unlike those January resolutions that may have gone by the wayside already, let's start small. Add 5 minutes to your prayer time. You don't have a "prayer time", Lent is a great time to start; pray before all your meals; say a Lord's Prayer at bedtime; re-read the Gospel from the previous Sunday and see how you can apply it to your life; just take a moment before falling asleep and thank God for the gift of today (yes, even with all its aches and pains and frustrations); attend the Lenten Devotions at Redeemer. The opportunities to pray are there – you just have to see and use them. Fasting is not just about not

getting that coffee at a shop or not eating candy. Those are choices you may make BUT what are you doing with the money you are saving from not doing these habits? This could be added to your “alms giving” practice. Donate your “savings” to the church or another worthy cause. There is always the choice to fast from harmful things: gossip, complaining, listening to others speak ill of someone else, or doing it yourself. They say exercise is good for the body so this Lenten season lets stretch ourselves and share ourselves with someone who needs it.

Third Sunday of February is the First Sunday of Lent. The Gospel is a condensed version of Jesus’s baptism, 40 days in the desert being tempted, and the beginning of his ministry. The first part of the Gospel is a reminder that Jesus is claimed by the Father. It is also one of the manifestations of the Trinity. The second part of the Gospel is a statement of Jesus’s temptation by Satan. These are presented in other Gospel passages as: turn stones into bread, throw himself from a temple, and submit to Satan in exchange for power. Each of these are temptations we face: the temptation to have more; the temptation to challenge God; and the temptation to worship things other than God for worldly power. In the final part of the Gospel lesson, Jesus begins with the statement: the kingdom of God has come near and then calls us to repentance and belief. The kingdom of God is what we are working towards throughout our lives and during our faith journey. It is a gift that is given to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We became adopted sons and daughters. We can’t earn it or buy it. As with any gift we have to accept or reject it. The call to repentance is simply: deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for a past sin, wrongdoing, or the like or regret for any past action. In our case, if we are truly sorry it is shown in our actions – changing our ways. Lent is a time for us to re-examine our lives and how we are living. What do we need to change. What do we need to strengthen. The final part is belief. We are called to believe in the good news. What is the good news?!? It is simply that we were created by a loving God to love Him and one another. The good news is the Gospels. The good news is that Jesus loves us enough to come and show us the way the Father through his living example. God made man by choice, came and dwelt among us SHOWING us the way back to the Father. The good news is the Jesus died for us all: each and every individual who has lived, is living, or will live to open Heaven for us. The good news is that through his resurrection he conquered death.

The fourth Sunday in February we continue on our Lenten journey. We hear Jesus refer to Peter as Satan! This occurs just after Peter names Jesus as the Messiah. Got to love Peter. He has such passion! Peter goes all in, all the time. Sadly, for us, Jesus also calls us a) deny ourselves, b) to pick up our cross and c) follow him. None of these are easy things to do. We like our comforts. We would like things easy. Following Jesus is hard. This is where grace and faith come in. Grace, faith, and belief is what makes us able to do these things. Our belief and love in someone greater than ourselves give us the strength needed to deny ourselves. It gives us the perseverance to pick up our cross and carry on. It gives us the power to follow. Jesus never said it would be easy; in fact, he frequently warns us just the opposite! But that reward at the end; that promise; that gift that Jesus purchased for us: eternal life with him, is worth the pain and suffering we go through in this life. And, we know Jesus understands – he went through it, too. This Lent, embrace your cross and follow him; he will not abandon you.