

Our 40 days of Lenten observance are over.

We began our Lenten journey together back on February 18, and on that day, we were invited to observe a Holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; prayer, fasting, and self-denial, and reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. So, how did it go, how was it?

I really would actually really like to hear how it was, so send me an email, or let's go for coffee..

At the very beginning of his ministry, after his baptism, Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness, and during that time, with all other distractions taken away, he was tempted. And these temptations are important, because if not confronted and tackled and overcome, certain human tendencies will be harmful, for ourselves, and also for others.

The Lenten spiritual journey, each year, asks us first about our hunger, perhaps the most primal of all human experiences, and very real in all our lives in all kinds of ways –

how do we experience hunger, what kinds of hunger show up in our lives, and how do we attempt to satisfy our hunger, what do we depend on to take away the discomfort of our many hungers.

And, Lent has us pay attention to the ego, who do we think we are, who do we think we could be or should be? In what do we trust? In our own selves, in God?

And, Lent pulls to the forefront our relationship with control – do we crave it? Are we quick to take control, do we want to dominate the worlds we live in? Do we believe we have control? Are we willing, and able, to let go, acknowledging the power and presence of God as actually having control?

Wrestling with all of this and overcoming it is where Jesus' ministry begins ... and wrestling with all of this, every year, is, for us, Lent. This wrestling and overcoming was Jesus' preparation for ministry and for its consequences, and Lent is an important part of our ongoing *becoming* for discipleship, and for its consequences.

Jesus' life is one of love and healing, relationship and presence, equity and justice, and it took him to the cross, but that wasn't the end.

All Christians believe, in the broadest terms, that Christ died and rose again. But Christians don't agree on what that actually means. Was Jesus' resurrection an actual event in actual history, with an actual body? Was the resurrection a mysterious but real *experience of faith* recounted by those who themselves encountered the 'risen' Christ? Is there still "truth" in the resurrection if it doesn't involve an actual physical body, risen, actually, from the dead?

Our brains will always struggle reaching for absolute "truth" in this most holy mystery. Even if we see things with our own eyes, we still don't always believe what's right in front of us if it doesn't fit with our ideas about the world. So, rather than rely solely on ideas, on our thinking, the spiritual path, this Christian spiritual path, also insists we recruit the wisdom of the body.

Each one of us is of real and physical stuff that has ancestral links stretching all the way back to the beginning. Our DNA, stuff in our cells, it's all part of a continuous and ongoing process of life, our bodies essentially recycled from one generation of life on earth to the next, we breathe the same air, we drink the same water that's been present on the planet and part of life stories since the beginning.

Our bodies are part of this massive story, our bodies are keepers of deep wisdom, and our spiritual practices encourage us to pay attention to that – especially, because of the ways we’re tempted to respond to the world around us and the people in it, and then do harm to bodies, our own, the bodies of others, the planet.

Our bodies are made of shared ancient stuff and have a lot to teach us about life, its meaning and purpose, and about God, but we’re not always very good at listening.

Relying just on ideas and thinking, we could all likely stumble through some kind of explanation about the truth of God in the Risen Christ, why Easter’s important, but whatever we come up with, it’ll never be complete, because our thinking, sentence-making minds are the youngest, least experienced, least wise part of our whole selves, bound as they are to this time and place, this culture, today’s language –

We need to be grounded in the ancient wisdom of our embodied selves if we’re to live a life in which Christ’s glorious resurrection has true meaning and makes real-life sense. Our bodies can ‘know’ and respond even if our minds are baffled.

So, during Lent, we choose to experience hunger of all kinds, and see what it teaches us, we choose certain Spiritual disciplines and pay attention to the way we respond, or resist, or embrace what we’re doing, and we study Scripture – what is our shared story? what is the truth and presence of God in the world through time, in the bodies of our ancestors in the faith, in us?

Our bodies and our minds, together, carrying us forward to greater freedom and fullness of life in God because of what we learn from these whole-self experiences, from the wisdom of the ‘whole body.’

Ideas on their own can limit us, can actually keep us separated from deep wisdom, especially when ideas don't draw on the actual physical reality of being *alive*. Yet we cling to them, because familiar ideas can feel safe and dependable and comfortable and they can actually protect us from truths we don't want to acknowledge.

Being attentive to our whole self, even letting the body rather than our thinking mind take the lead from time to time, can feel a bit like taking off a favorite pair of shoes.

Those shoes might be comfortable, nice arch support, some heel cushioning, we might walk with confidence, stride out over all terrains, unphased by where we're walking, it doesn't matter! ... if we take those shoes off, and go instead barefoot, we notice everything as we walk, we can't avoid it.

Those first barefoot footsteps might be more tentative, there's definitely going to be some discomfort along the way, but we are connecting, fully, with the ground, and learning to respond, fully, to the experience.

Lent and our walk into Holy Week is a 'barefoot experience' – we may never be able to adequately explain what the heck is going on at Easter, the full and indisputable truth of the mystery of the Resurrection, but I wonder if we need to, to live into it.

Christ didn't die on the cross to live locked in our minds as a theological idea, but to live in this world, always, through us, through the whole self, the whole body.

So how it feels to be us, how we journey through this life, as a whole, embodied self, how we respond to it all, how we respond to life's temptations and its stressors, it's a whole-body thing.

And I think God become flesh and lived among us, died and rose again because that matters, the continued God-given, God-beloved, and *very good* life of the body matters.

Our 40 days of Lenten observance are over, now it's time to *live* what we learned.

Friends, Christ is Risen!