



First United Methodist Church of Hanford
Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.



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“Lent: wrestling with the soul”

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted^[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:9-15

Lent is like a wrestling match with the soul. Throughout Scripture we read of individuals and groups of people who find themselves in a wrestling match with God, angels, demons, and themselves. Wrestling with who they are, who they are to become, where to go, how to move forward, how to be faithful to God in the midst of pain, anger, injustice, uncertainty, and tragedy.

The wilderness of the soul can be a frightful and dangerous place but it can also be a place where our senses are sensitive like never before. Over the next several weeks we will explore the wilderness together. Whether you face a wilderness of the heart - a soul searching time, a wilderness of the mind - a time of questioning, reason, and doubt, or a physical wilderness - a time of pain, brokenness, and discomfort, we need to learn how to listen. There is much to be given and received, lost and found in the listening.

It is listening that I challenge you to focus on these next forty days. Listen to the struggle; to the frustrations, disappointments, hungers. Listen to the journey - the process; the ups and downs, the insecurities, the desire to want more and the feeling of never enough. Lean in to the learning, what you know - what you do not know; lean into the unlearning, and learning again. Lean in to the listening. Listen for understanding, not simply for a chance to respond. Listen for spiritual growth and wisdom, not just so you can look good, or check off another I am a good Christian box. It is in the listening that we grow. It is in listening that we find our way through to truth.

The beauty of Lent is that it can show us how God moves among us even in the midst of pain and anger, injustice, uncertainty and tragedy. Wrestling is a back and forth, give and take, kind of struggle where we continually search for our constant reassurance, balance, and position. It is not necessarily meant to be easy. It is not meant to be all fun and games. But rather, it is meant for us, like Jesus, to stand us on the edge of a personal wilderness, remembering our baptism - our commitment to God.

We remember the words of God telling us, “you are my beloved, you matter, you are capable, you are where you need to be, your life has meaning, and you are enough...now walk in faith - find your way with me (God) step by step, no matter what may happen.

Let us prayer - We reach for you God in this season of Lent. We grasp into the dark places of reflection and sacrifice. We wrestle with questions, decisions, assumptions, and expectations. We seek answers, healing, and wholeness. Find us in the wrestling God, raise us from the ashes that we might kneel before the cross.

“Now I can say I Live a Day” (John Wesley)

Pastor Pablo

February 24th, 2021

Online Devotionals

To grow in your relationship with God and others, it is important to have some spiritual disciplines in your life. Below are some helpful websites that will lead you to read scripture, pray, and focus on God.

UPPER ROOM DAILY DEVOTIONAL <https://www.upperroom.org/devotionals>

A daily devotional including scripture lesson and story.

UPPER ROOM DAILY REFLECTIONS <https://upperroombooks.com/neweverymorning/>