

THE SEASON OF LENT

In the church calendar, Lent marks the 40 days from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday (*excluding Sundays*), and is meant to prepare our hearts for the events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. This 40 day period is modeled after Jesus' 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness. Lent is a season that encourages self-examination, confession, and repentance of sin as we remember that the resurrection only takes place after the crucifixion. It is a time for us in the church to symbolically follow Christ into the wilderness so that we might have a deeper longing for the hope of Easter. Each of us are free in Christ to observe or not observe Lent in whatever way aligns with your conscience. The following postures and practices are a suggestion for entering into the meaning of this season:

- **Prayer & Fasting:** Fasting is a practice where we forgo physical food (*or other tangible pleasures*) for a period of time in order to experience spiritual renewal. Fasting is meant to weaken the desires of our flesh that often distract us from what we truly need for nourishment. Lent is a time for fasting and self-denial in order to empty ourselves of lesser things so that we might be filled with the greater things of the gospel. (See *Matt. 6:16-18*)
- **Confession & Repentance:** Though the Christian life should always be marked by repentance and faith, in the season of Lent we have a heightened sense of our own desperate need for the mercy of grace and Jesus. Consider how in this season you might create more focused times of confession to God and to one another so we might repent of our sin and turn to our Savior. (See *Psalms 32, 51, 1 John 1:9*)
- **Self-Examination:** Through focused times of silence and solitude with the Lord, Lent is a time for us to consider our own weakness and mortality. Ash Wednesday begins with the call to “remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (*Gen. 3:19*). This season we are to remember that our only comfort in life and in death is “that I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ” (*Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1*).

