



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

First Sunday in Lent (C) – Romans 10:8b-13

Focus: *Confessing Christ*

word of life

“For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:13 NRSV)

Read Romans 10:8b-13

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Season of Lent, a time of repentance, reflection, and re-commitment. The early church used the days of Lent as an intensified time of study to prepare candidates for baptism at the Easter Vigil. Today it is common during Lent to either “give up” a bad habit or “take on” a spiritual discipline (such as daily devotions, fasting, or acts of kindness).

1. *What traditions do you associate with Lent?*
2. *How might giving up a bad habit or taking on a spiritual discipline be helpful?*
3. *What concerns (if any) do you have about these Lenten practices?*

If Apostle Paul were alive today, it is quite possible he might raise questions about current Lenten practices. Minimally, he would fervently caution against any hint of trying to earn God’s favor through Lenten practices. Paul’s theology reflects his own early years of attempting to implement the teachings of the law to earn God’s favor. With fervent passion, Paul pursued his life as a Pharisee in order to fulfill the law. That passion put him on a direct path to persecute Christians. And then—Paul’s life was transformed by his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. (See Acts 9)

Through his writings, Paul’s openly shared the story of his own journey from relying upon the law to trusting in Christ. With great skill Paul taught and wrote about the nearness of Christ and God’s grace extended to all. Paul quotes Moses, “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.” (Romans 10:8 NRSV)

Written at the end of Paul’s life, this letter to the Romans provides a culmination of Paul’s teaching. His passion is clear: “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” (Romans 10:1 NRSV) He continues, “For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.” (Romans 10:10 NRSV)

4. *What does it mean to be saved?*
5. *What are we being saved from?*
6. *Which comes first – belief or confession?*

Paul believes God wants all to be saved and embraces that core principle with his whole being. “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:12-13 NRSV) God’s generosity extends to all who call on the name of the Lord. It is God who is ready and waiting for us. God’s grace is God’s action toward us, breaking down barriers along the way.

7. *What are the implications of this verse?*
8. *What is the shortest possible creed?*

We respond to God by faith in Christ. Hopefully, our Lenten practices will be extremely helpful as we seek ways to call on the name of the Lord.

Word among us

The interfaith faith leaders gathered one summer evening in a hot elementary school gymnasium to pray to end violence in their community. Hundreds of people joined them for this prayer vigil. “Enough of the homicides,” said one of the leaders. Others cried out, “Enough of the robberies.” “Enough of the gang brutalities.” “Enough.”

Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and others came on that particular night to pray for peace. They found a common ground in their ardent concern for peace in their community. And for one night in a gymnasium, there was peace.

1. *Does God hear and respond when people from other faith traditions pray?*
2. *What has been your personal interaction with those from other faith traditions?*
3. *Does God’s grace extend to faith-filled non-Christians? If so, how?*

In the first century, Paul reached out beyond the Jew and invested his time in reaching Gentiles, those who did not know of God’s relationship with Israel. “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:12-13 NRSV)

4. *Could God’s grace possibly be so generous to extend to all who call on God? Explain.*
5. *How does God tear down walls?*

It can be mind-boggling to discern God’s response to all people in all situations. At some point, we stop and pause. Lent is that season to stop and pause to ask significant questions such as:

6. *How do I call upon God?*
7. *How do the words from my mouth reflect my faith in Christ?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

Lent is an excellent time to evaluate our daily faith practices and make intentional efforts to align our lifestyle with our faith. We pause to reflect on the gift of our baptism and our own desire to respond to God’s generosity to us through a response of faith and faith-filled living. We confess Christ as the one who reigns over our life.

The word of faith is not to be left unspoken. “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)...” (Romans 10:8 NRSV) If that word of faith does not come easily to your mouth, then perhaps it is time to reflect upon your faith.

8. *What do you believe about Christ? What is the shortest possible confession of faith?*
9. *What is the shortest possible confession of faith?*
10. *What does it matter to you that Christ died and was raised from the dead?*

Prayer

Christ, may the words from our lips reflect our heart and desire to serve you alone. Amen

last word

Make an intentional point
to call upon God throughout the day.

Daily Faith Practices

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