



Kirknewton and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

Minister: Rev Dr André J Groenewald
8 Manse Court, East Calder, Livingston, EH53 0HF
Tel: 01506 884585, Mob: 075 888 458 14, email: groenstes@yahoo.com
www.knec4jesus.org.uk



Sermon: 21 February 2010

PART 1: LENT

Reading: Matthew 6.1-6 (NT page 970)

Reflection on Lent

The season of Lent (originally 36 days) was introduced by Pope Felix III in the fourth century as a time of penitence in preparation for the jubilation of Easter. Four days were added in 487 and the link made with the 40 days Jesus spent fasting and being tempted in the wilderness. The six Sundays in Lent are not counted among the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter," a celebration of Jesus' victory over sin and death! In western Christianity, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Traditionally ashes (today often made by burning palm crosses which were blessed the previous Palm Sunday) were placed on the heads of believers as a sign of penitence, making the connection with Jesus' conscious decision to turn his face to Jerusalem and go to his death.

In biblical literature, the number 40 represents 'a long period of time':

- The Flood lasted for 40 days and 40 nights.
- The Hebrew people spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land.
- Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai with God, before receiving the Ten Commandments.
- It is believed that Jesus lay for 40 hours in the tomb.

In Latin the term *quadragesima* (translation of the original Greek *tessarakoste*, the "fortieth day" before Easter) is used. In the late Middle Ages, as sermons began to be given in the common spoken language of a people, as instead of Latin, the English word *lent* was adopted. This word initially simply meant *spring* (as in German language *Lenz* and Dutch *lente*) and derives from the Germanic root for *long* because in the spring the days visibly lengthen!

The hangings of Lent (where these are used) are purple, associated with mourning (for the pain and suffering of the crucifixion), as well as with royalty (Christ's sovereignty).

Meaning:

In the season of Lent we need to:

- Focus more on what Jesus did for us as on our own selfishness,
- Show the world around us the meaning of being saved by Christ's blood through our actions of love,
- Focus on doing good to everyone around us;
- Focus and live the hope that we are not going to die but live forever and ever with God;
- Remember that this season is not about US and how super we are to give up certain things;
- Be thankful and full of joy because Jesus saved us from the bondages of sin death and HELL!

Lent Activity

I want everyone to take the extra sheet of paper in the order of service and fold it in half, then in half again so that you produce a sheet marked into quarters, with a cross shape in the middle.

How are you going to use Lent to reach out and show that you are saved by the grace of God?

Well we can think of doing four things, writing, after the service, one in each quarter of your sheet of paper. It will be easy to remember because they are faith, hope, love and thanksgiving.

1. Think of how you can use your faith and trust in the Lord to reach out to people in need people that are hurting, people that do not believe in Jesus Christ.
2. Think of how you can use the hope that you have received to help people that are bereaved, anxious and in need of the Lord's presence.
3. Think of how you can change the world around you through your actions of love.
4. Think of ways you can show your gratitude towards the Lord for saving you by living a life that glorifies God!

PART 2: Crucifixion

Reading - Mark 15:21-32

Reflection

- **CRUCIFIXION WAS** a common mode of punishment among heathen nations in early times. It is not certain whether it was known among the ancient Jews; probably it was not. The modes of capital punishment according to the Mosaic law were, by the sword (Ex. 21), strangling, fire (Lev. 20), and stoning (Deut. 21).
- This was regarded as the most horrible form of death, and to a Jew it would acquire greater horror!
- This punishment began by subjecting the sufferer to whipping. In the case of our Lord, however, his whipping was rather before the sentence was passed upon him, and was inflicted by Pilate for the purpose, probably, of CREATING pity and ACQUIRING his escape from further punishment.
- The condemned one carried his own cross ACTUALLY JUST THE cross-beam (*patibulum*) like a slave to the scene of his torture and death, always outside the city, while a herald carried in front of him the 'title', the written accusation, to the place of execution, which was outside the city, in some conspicuous place set apart for the purpose.
- Before the nailing to the cross took place, a medicated cup of vinegar mixed with gall and myrrh (the sopor) was given, for the purpose of deadening the pangs of the sufferer.
- Our Lord refused this cup, that his senses might be clear (Matt. 27:34).
- The spongy of vinegar, sour wine, posca, the common drink of the Roman soldiers, which was put on a hyssop stalk and offered to our Lord in scornful pity, he tasted to relieve the agonies of his thirst.
- The accounts given of the crucifixion of our Lord are in entire agreement with the customs and practices of the Roman in such cases.
- He was crucified between two "criminals", and was watched by a party of four soldiers, with their centurion, the officer in charge of a unit
- The "breaking of the legs" of the criminals was intended to hasten death, and put them out of misery; but the unusual speed of our Lord's death was due to his previous sufferings and his great mental anguish.
- Apart from the single upright post (*crux simplex*) on which the victim was tied or impaled, there were three types of cross. The *crux commissa* (St Anthony's cross) was shaped like a capital T, the *crux decussata* (St Andrew's cross) was shaped like the letter X; the *crux immissa* was the familiar two beams †, held by tradition to be the shape of the cross on which our Lord died.

- Above his head as the sign “INRI” which translates Jesus the Nazarene King of Jews!

Children’s Activity: The children have previously received materials to plant crosses.

I want each one of you now to plant the crosses and think of what happened to Jesus! Also, keep these crosses next to your beds and think of Jesus’ victory every time you see them!

Amen