

Lenten Devotional March 17, 2022

Scripture

Psalm 147:12-20

12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!
13 For he strengthens the bars of your gates;
he blesses your children within you.
14 He grants peace within your borders;
he fills you with the finest of wheat.
15 He sends out his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.
16 He gives snow like wool;
he scatters frost like ashes.
17 He hurls down hail like crumbs —
who can stand before his cold?
18 He sends out his word, and melts them;
he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.
19 He declares his word to Jacob,
his statutes and ordinances to Israel.
20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation;
they do not know his ordinances.
Praise the Lord!

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Steve Tuell, Professor Emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament

In Pittsburgh where I live, Lent always comes in wintertime. But the wintry language of Psalm 147 may seem suitable to this season of the church year wherever you call home. The liturgical color for Lent is purple—an appropriately grim and gloomy shade. But we likely think of Lent in even more somber, *Winter* shades: the penitential black of clerical robes and leafless branches; the gray of ash on our foreheads and of clouded winter skies; the dingy off-white of sackcloth, like dirty snow.

Yet, curiously, the word “Lent” has nothing to do with Winter—or for that matter, with fasting or penitence. Etymologically, “Lent” derives from the Middle English *lenten* and the Old English *lencten*, and is related to the Old High German *lenzin*, all of which mean “Spring”!

These 40 days of preparation are appropriately penitential, marked by self-examination, prayer and fasting, but they need not be grim and colorless. “Lent” *means* Spring—a green season, a time of growth. Lent provides the opportunity for us to break up the fallow ground of our cold hearts, as God makes the wind of the Spirit blow and the Water of Life flow into us. Lent is the time for the Spirit to prune away our dead branches so that we may bear fruit. Lent can be a season of new life—a springtime for our souls.

Friends, God grant you a green, growing, God-filled Lent!

Prayer

Artist of souls,

you sculpted a people for yourself

out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.

Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,

that the discipline of these forty days

may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,

and whet our thirst for the living water you offer

through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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