

Lent- Surrender

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A Short Devotional for the Lenten Season

Days 15-21

Lent 2021

Surrender

Lent 2021- Day 15

³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' ” Gen. 3:3 (ESV)

Forbidden fruit is a funny thing. The minute somebody says you can't, it becomes more attractive. Whether my grandmother's dinner or a promised toy, the forbidden suddenly appears attractive and enticing.



Some lose their life to the attraction. Lent teaches and reminds us that we are image bearers of God who have His best intentions. When God forbids humans from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, they possess life without striving for the tree. How we would thrive in remembering God's providence more than feeding into our desiring hearts. How our souls might grow in contentment if we realized that life was set before us.

Surrender, then, is an act of choosing life. Surrendering to his will, as we struggle in the flesh, gives life as we remember the one who gives us something better than the unseen, overpromising, and under-delivering goods of this world. As we surrender in Lent, choose life. We do not boast about it as to gloat in ourselves. We do not require others of it as if to walk in the way of the Pharisee. We quietly surrender and choose life.



Surrender

Lent - Day 16

²²As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, Matthew 17:22 (ESV)

As I look back to my high school years, betrayal was one of my deepest fears. Betrayal of friendship and trust wounds deeply in ways unseen and unspoken. In my memory, they caused fights (physical and verbal), caused insecurity, motivated gossip, and broke friendships. Yet, I cannot help but wonder how Jesus walked, knowing he would face betrayal.

Throughout the gospel accounts, Jesus mentions his betrayal several times. There are earlier accounts and later ones. The mark of betrayal weighed on him throughout his ministry. And yet, when he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is resigned to it, as if he accepts it.

He uses the words, “yet not as I will but your will be done” (Lk. 22:42). So, it should not surprise us that he instructs his disciples to pray the same way. He teaches his disciples the way of surrender.

For us, surrender might seem uncomfortable. It seems too yielding. It relinquishes control and lowers defenses. It leaves little room for desire and erodes personal choice. Jesus, in his moment of truth sets the tone for His disciples. They will walk this road, and some even die on a cross. Remember that surrender is a part of discipleship. Walk with the savior.

What areas of your life are hardest to surrender? What vulnerable parts of your soul do you hold tightly so that no one can touch? Pray: nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.

Surrender

Lent Day 17

***33**So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
Luke 14:33 (ESV)*

The one who creates the shopping list holds the kitchen's power. For those who cook, the shopper holds the keys of flavor, ingredients, and tone. Without the list, a chef can only make magic with the boundaries of inventory. Spices, cuts of meat, and vegetables are only as good as those that are given by the shopper.



So too, with our lives. We can only go as far spiritually with the Lord as we surrender. Jesus teaches in Luke 14 about how to follow him. He illustrates with a construction project and a king waging war. Both require careful devotion to considering their limitations and then giving themselves accordingly. Jesus, though requires thorough surrender.

Often, our lives succumb to the pressures of this world. At others times, we are given to our own expectations and goals. Still even other times, our desires to keep up with others takes us away from true surrender to our Lord.

Discipleship with Jesus means careful calculation as to the cost of surrender. The tower requires supplies. The approaching army has great power. Both possibilities demand a reflection and action.

What part of your life might Jesus ask of you? What decisions or burdens might Christ ask as part of surrender to Him?

Surrender

Lent - Day 18

5I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5 (ESV)

When a child is born, nutritionally, they cannot live apart from their mother. Nutrients, social bonding, and comfort come naturally through proximity to the loving arms and nurturing of a nursing mother. In many ways, they cannot live apart from their mother.

In His last days, Jesus reiterates at the closeness required for his disciples. and he points them to a vine. “Apart from me you can do nothing.” A poignant picture for a curious group. They did not know it was Jesus’ last days. They could not have known the impending mocking, crucifixion, and trial that lay ahead. They could not have imagined establishing churches under the hand of persecution. They might have refrained if not for this teaching: abide in me, for apart from me you can do nothing.



The modern problem is apart from Christ, we seemingly do many things. We can make our fortunes. We can turn on the water, and water appears. When we hunger, our daily bread might arrive at our doorstep. “Need” and “want” are hard to determine.

Christ’s disciples make a conscious decision to abide in Him, giving him the priority in being the vine from which we emerge. As you consider the fruit of your life, what vine did it come from? The vine of surrender or the vine of self sufficiency?

Surrender

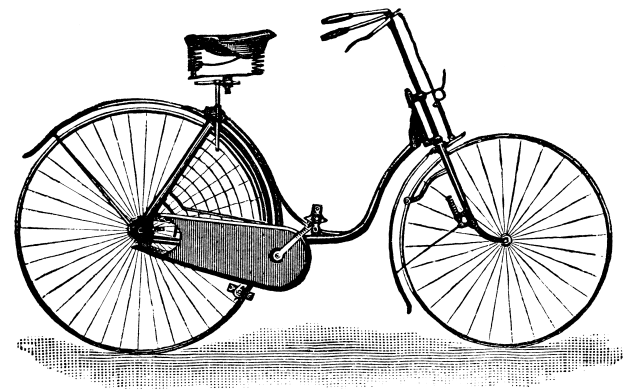
Lent - Day 19

18There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 1 John 4:18 (ESV)

Last summer, my children learned how to ride a bicycle. Step by step, pedal by pedal, they strung enough rotations with the perfect calculus of core strength and balance to move this vehicle of metal, chains, and tires. And yet the formula for this was not in our instruction or in the verbal commands. It did not happen because of perfect obedience or clear pictures. They surrendered to the synchrony of momentum, gravity, and motion.

Our lives in surrender with God operate in a similar fashion. No relationship exists without trust and devotion, and even more so a relationship with God through His Spirit. Surrender to a powerful God in a proper way means understanding His perfect love. It casts out fear. It perfects.

As we understand our surrendering, know that our God is merciful and slow to anger. Surrender is not a bad thing when given to perfect love. As John says eloquently, it casts out fear. And fear has to do with punishment. As you surrender, ride the bike. Look not to your past or your imperfections. Do not look down at the shifting ground of your personal failures or the fears from your experiences. Look forward to new heights with God.



Our surrendering relationship with the Lord, in the words of Carlo Walth is one of formation friendship.¹ As you yield, find joy and acceptance. He is not a harsh master. He is gentle and kind. He knows you. He loves you.

¹ Carlo Walth, *The Surrendering Guide* from the Sacred Arts Series, (Carlo Walth, 2013), p. 109.

Surrender

Lent - Day 20

17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, Ephesians 3:17 (ESV)

Getting grounded in high school usually meant not leaving the house. Chores lined up, books stacked up, and time disappeared into a hole of meaningless routine and rote obedience. However, looking back, “grounding” is a way of acclimating to your parents’ love.

What are the causes of said grounding anyways? Usually it results from staying out too late, ignoring parental instruction, or simple rebellion. And the response? Grounding the teen into parental love. Though often it takes the form of punishment, the boundary setting reminds the teen of an overarching love that protects, provides, cares enough to set limits.



Paul writes to the Ephesians that they might be grounded in God’s love to the point that they know the fullness of God. Being grounded in love transforms our soul. And surrendering to this kind of love grounds us to the point that nothing separates us from the love of God. Not trial. Not pain. Not persecution. Not death.

As we surrender in Lent, surrender to His providential love. It grounds us and roots us so that we might become immovable and steadfast, not in our selves but in His love.

What ways do you hide from God’s love? Imagine a time or place without God’s love. What would it be like? What would it mean to act and move from a place of God’s love.

Surrender

Lent -Day 21

*²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
Matthew 16:25 (ESV)*



A symbol of death becomes the symbol of life. In this saying, Jesus points to a reality that many found abhorrent and even dreadful - a cross. The cross, invented by the Persian empire, communicated to enemies of the state that it was not worth it. Hungry for subversion? Looking for a rebellion? Eat a cross. And Jesus pointed to the cross as the symbol of his movement. A symbol of surrender to earthly powers will now symbolize surrendering to the God of the universe who saves through heavenly surrender.

Jesus tells his disciples that in losing, they are finding their very lives. A confusing saying, and yet, Jesus invites them to a filling life. How does this happen? The life with Jesus is one of descending and not ascending. We don't find more of ourselves with Christ, we actually lose more. We don't attain god-status; we actually become slaves of Christ.

How then do we know who we are in Christ? The mystery of union with Christ points to His filling and our emptying. When I think of my adolescence, I think of youthful strength, endless energy, and high ideals. When I think of my present adulthood, I think of limited strength, lower energy, and lesser ideals. What happened? A part of me died, and another part lives.

Surrendering to Christ means living more with him. Our efforts and insecurities die, and his embrace becomes more real. Our passions shift like the sands over the years, and His passions form like concrete. Our ideals of self-perfection die, and His healing hand of grace and redemption heal the scars of our pursuits. Emotional hurts of the past give way to a healing that reminds us, though we hurt and though we experience loss, we gain life.

In Lent find surrender. Find life in our death. We live as the community who claims that we have died only to find new life. Our symbol is not one of personal victory and accolades. It is not a trophy to hoist, but rather a cross to carry. A cross was carried in love. A cross that brings life.