



*Jesus said, “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:17-19)*

When I was working as a camp counselor during my college years, once a week we would refrain from eating lunch as a way to focus our attention on those in the world who suffered from daily hunger. We called it “meager meal.” That seemed like a hokey name to me, but I have to admit that not eating lunch on a hot summer day filled with activities did impact me. I was more grateful than usual for dinner, and the prayers for the world’s starving population did actually mean something.

I’ve since discovered that my age, combined with my high metabolism, doesn’t lend itself to fasting unless it’s required of me for a medical procedure, and even then it’s a challenge.

But Lent is a time when we might want to think of fasting as a spiritual discipline. Fasting, or refraining from some activity that we’re accustomed to, can indeed draw our attention away from ourselves and toward the suffering servant Jesus Christ. While the easy or common choices seem to be things like giving up chocolate or coffee or fast food, it’s probably more beneficial to choose something that

might have deeper meaning. To that end, I share with you the following words from Pope Francis, who offers some suggestions that could have a lasting impact:

**“Do you want to fast this Lent?**

- Fast from hurting words, and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness, and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger, and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism, and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries, and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints; contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures, and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness; fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness, and be compassionate.
- Fast from grudges, and be reconciled.
- Fast from words; be silent and listen.”

**May our Lenten journey be strengthened and supported by any or all of these practices.**

**Pastor Chuck**

**Let us pray. Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. As we enter the Lenten season may our fasting invoke the kind of speech, gratitude, patience, hope, trust, simplicity, joy, compassion, and forgiveness that He embodied. Amen.**