

## Daily Devotion For February 17, 2021

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.” Matthew 4:1-2

Today, February 17<sup>th</sup> is Ash Wednesday and marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is the season on the Christian liturgical calendar beginning on Ash Wednesday and leading up to Easter. Lent lasts approximately 6 weeks. The season is 40 days long, but it's celebrated over 46 days. This is because each Sunday of Lent is considered a 'mini Easter' and is not counted as part of the 40 day Lent observance. Christians have observed the tradition of Lent since the early days of Christianity.

Lent is meant to be a time of spiritual preparation. The purpose of the 40 day length is to recall the 40 days of temptation that Jesus endured in preparation for his public ministry. Just as Jesus spent 40 days in the desert while spiritually preparing for his ministry, so too Christians are to spend Lent spiritually preparing for Easter. During this time, Christians are meant to focus on spiritual self-examination, renewal, and growth.

**Thought For Today:** As we begin the season of Lent today, remember Lent is a time of fasting and abstinence. This is where the common phrase "I'm giving up meat or chocolate for Lent" idea comes from. Many Christians 'give up' something during Lent. This practice of denial is meant to prepare our heart to experience anew the power of Christ's suffering, death, and ultimately, resurrection during Holy week.

**Today's Prayer Focus:** Pray that this season of Lent will prepare you and our church family to reflect more fully on the cross, and thereby deepen and enrich our experience of Easter. Continue to pray this week's prayer fuel. Deo Volente.