

DARE TO RESIST!

A Lenten Worship Series on accepting the power God gives to resist sin, evil, injustice and oppression

Over the years I learned that the worst idolatry we can engage in is the worship of self. All other idolatries stem from this desire to worship oneself. Jesus said, deny thyself and follow me and he taught that the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve. The apostle Paul reminded us that Jesus did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but self-emptied himself for our sake. The Way of Jesus invites us to a love that puts God above all else and puts our neighbors first as an expression of our love for God. So, in reflecting over the gospel readings for Lent, the worship team and I discovered that these scriptures were teaching us something about the self which Jesus calls us to deny.

Below is a thematic outline and synopsis for this year's Lenten series.

March 6, Ash Wednesday. Two services: 12:00pm (Taize Service) and 7:00pm (Communion Service). This service invites us to a Lenten journey of engaging spiritual disciplines or practices of self-denial, repentance and reconciliation.

March 10, Lent 1: ...*The folly of self-importance* (*def.: an exaggerated estimate of one's own importance*)—**Luke 4:1-13.** The gospel reading this week tells the account of Jesus time in the desert where he was tempted and tested by Satan. All three of Satan's tests attempted to lead Jesus to exploit his power and privilege as God's son to serve himself and his own needs. We learn from Satan's temptations the folly of self-importance, and we learn from Jesus the appropriate response and deference to God necessary for faithful living.

March 17, Lent 2: ...*The folly of self-preservation* (*def.: a natural or instinctive tendency to act so as to preserve oneself from destruction or harm*)—**Luke 13:31-35.** The gospel reading this week tells the account about the time some Pharisees exhorted Jesus to run away and flee because Herod wanted to kill him. In the passage, Jesus boldly defies their plea and argues instead that he has work to do that he intends to finish. We learn from the Pharisee the folly of self-preservation, and we learn from Jesus that we cannot ultimately save ourselves but that only the God of life can do that.

March 24, Lent 3: ...*The folly of self-righteousness* (def.: convinced of one's own righteousness especially in contrast with the actions and beliefs of others)—Luke 13:1-9**.** The gospel reading this week tells the story of Jews who were so livid over an atrocious act that Pilate committed when he killed a group of Galileans who were offering their sacrifices in the temple. In response, Jesus does not join their self-righteous anger but rather warns against it. We learn from the crowd the folly of self-righteousness and learn from Jesus that the healing and peace of the world begins with us turning away from our own sin and self-destructiveness.

March 31, Lent 4: ...*The folly of self-partiality* (def.: a prejudice in favor of one's own claims or interest; an excessive estimate of oneself compared to others)—Luke 1:1-3, 11b-32**.** The gospel reading this week tells the story of the prodigal son. In the passage the older brother's protest over his father's extravagant celebration over the return of his younger brother reveals a deeply felt resentment in which the older brother thinks he is better than his younger brother. We learn from the older brother the folly of self-partiality and learn from Jesus that God shows no partiality but loves extravagantly.

April 07, Lent 5: ...*The folly of self-interest* (def.: regard for one's own interest or advantage, especially with disregard for others)—John 12:1-8**.** The gospel reading this week tells the story of how Judas complains about Mary's extravagant act of anointing Jesus with very expensive oil. In the passage, Judas is revealed as ultimately not being concerned about the poor but about himself. We learn from Judas the folly of self-interest and learn from Jesus that when something is truly offered up to God, it likely ceases to be of any use to us, except God's purposes.

April 14, Palm-Passion Sunday:—in this service we celebrate the liturgy of the palms and immediately turn toward **Holy Week** and the passion of Christ.

April 21, Easter: Easter begins a new series based on the book of Revelation, more specifically, based on John of Patmos' letters to the seven churches of Asia in chapter 2-3. In this series we will be invited to reflect on John's admonitions and exhortations to the churches as also being directed to us.

We invite you to come journey with us as we Dare to Resist the follies of sin, evil, injustice and oppression.

Pastor Shandi and the Worship Planning Team