

- [Isaiah 58:1-12](#)
- [Matthew 6:1-6,16-21](#)
- [Psalm 103](#)

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Jesus, seeker of quiet places,
you were surrounded by so many people
so much of the time.

May we find the kind of quiet that works for us
so that we, in public,
can manifest the dignity of a quiet inner life,
even when we're busy,
even when we're very busy
even when we feel like we have no time.

*Amen.*¹

Ya'll I have a confession to make. (it's Lent, right)

My Christmas Cards are still up.

Every single one of them.

The first one arrived promptly the Monday after Thanksgiving and I just received one last week.

I L.O.V.E. them.

When each card arrives I connect them to a ribbon that dangles from the doorway into our living room.

As they continue to arrive they cover the arch over the doorway.

And then they then dip down and hit my husband in the face as he enters into the space.

(He is less in love with these cards.)

Each day they remind me of where people are and their life updates

These cards announce new babies on the way

and celebrate loved ones who have entered into their heavenly rest.

Their faces remind me of places I have lived and the people I love who have since gotten taller, shorter, rounder, those who have moved, divorced,

and how we are all still somehow connected as companions even as our households are near and far apart.

These Christmas Cards are an outward and visible sign of those who have shared amazing grace and love in life.

IF they are so lovely, When does one take these down?

We have a house in the neighborhood that finally took down it's Christmas Tree down last year on Valentine's Day..... (I am wondering if it will be removed tonight when I got home!)

Valentine's Day, is another time that I grew up giving cards.

When I was younger, our household bought those red and white doilies that were in the shape of a heart. We painstakingly separated the doilies and then attached construction paper hearts on the center and wrote notes to each person in our class. Rather than choosing the right image, the emphasis of these cards was writing a personal message in the midst of that little construction paper heart.

Then after all that work, we delivered them.

My Favorite part!!!

In our elementary school classroom we ran around the classroom delivering with joy personalized notes to each and every one of my classmates. Our paper certificates of affection universally and completely dispersed.

AND

Then the teacher attempted to invite each of us back into a regular class day.

Bless her heart.

Here we are today on Valentine's Day

at Church,

to begin the season of Lent.

You received a bulletin as you entered into the building to remind you of where we are in this season and space. It's not quite a Valentine's Day card... or is it?

Filled with prayer, song, and scripture, the words you find in each bulletin paint amazing pictures.

In each of these components, we see snapshots of God's vibrant love for humanity.

We are reminded of the ancient story in Isaiah of a call to literally shout out and not hold back to share who this God is in the midst of trying times.

We are reminded in the psalm of god's persistent faithfulness and compassion to humanity in spite of our own mistakes.

Create in us clean hearts, Oh God.

Lent is a season of the church year where we breathe in and breathe out and prepare ourselves for Easter by realizing that in the birth of Jesus on this earth, his life will ultimately will lead to his death.

We are reminded in glimpses each week of the love that God has for all of humanity in our weekly and daily scriptures.

During this season of Lent, we may take on or give up practices that aim to facilitate our seeing God more clearly in our midst, that demand us to call by name where love can transform injustice.

Our Lenten practices invite our souls to know God's embrace and

be anchored in the knowledge of being known and loved, to try something new or let go of actions that do not build up the beloved community.

We are surrounded by people (known and unknown), our lives are busier than we might desire them to be, and yet today, We intentionally slow down and pause....

Remembering

that we have the continuing invitation to be transformed by God's grace, we, too can be agents of change for God.

On this past Sunday, Jesus took his disciples up to the mountain to be still, to be revealed, to be with them, to pray.

Today, we hear Jesus speaking to "how then shall we show our love for God in our lives?"

IN a glimpse Jesus reminds those listening what faithfulness looks like.

With broad brushstrokes, Jesus reminds the faithful how we too can picture faith in our own lives in prayer, in fasting and in giving-practices of the faithful. Candidly, wholeheartedly.

Each Wednesday, the trinity choristers sing Evensong in this space and then share a meal together where they talk about the saint of the day. Sometimes they talk about the season of the year and this year when Ash Wednesday came up they went “OH NO, it’s on Valentine’s Day” and then paused and thought about how fitting these two days coinciding might actually be.

If Valentine’s Day is about sharing love, what is the ultimate expression of love being shared?

Isn’t it truly through God’s deep love for humanity to send his son to live and breathe among us, to show us how to love one another, to show us that God is with us even through death.

A love that is so deep and expansive that it meets us when we feel unworthy, excluded, and alone—God bursts through all of our busy-ness of life to sit with us, carry us, remind us that indeed we are beloved.

Throughout scripture we are reminded that God’s love included the least likely,

Moses who doubted his abilities to lead and speak publicly.

Simeon and Anna who waited prayerfully, patiently to see Jesus as

a 40day old baby.

We are reminded of the people who encountered Jesus by *literally* running into him, interrupting him with their needs.

He came to see them, to meet them where they were and open up a new beginning a light within their ordinary.

A message of love written personally to them,
delivered in person in their midst,
and then their going back out into the ordinary world affirmed by
love and transformed with grace.

Jesus sees in you both the love that you need and the love that you
already have within you.

Like the Christmas cards still hanging in my doorway, God looks
with love at each of us and how we, too, have been transformed in
this life.

God shares in the challenging and joy-filled times, smiling upon us
and inviting us forward to receive fully.

How then shall we prepare ourselves for what is to come?

How than shall we build our relationship with God in this season?

How than shall we realize and then share God's love in our midst?

Each of you will find your own way this season.
You will choose your path, uniquely just like each of those
valentines and Christmas cards.

And just like those cards, know you are treasured for exactly who
you are.

Today we stand in a threshold, or doorway, with the opportunity to
be reminded of how deep the love of God is for each of us
and to re-discover that *even as* we will return to dust, God will be
there with us, too.

Amen.

¹ <https://www.spiritualityofconflict.com/readings/229/ash-wednesday>