

March 5, 2021

Text: Isaiah 58:6-7

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Devotion: Bria Clark

Fasting is a word that is not used super often. When I think of fasting, the following things come to mind:

- Ghandi
- sacrifice
- starving
- prayer
- choice
- discernment
- intentional
- meals vs days?
- the opposite of slowing (just kidding)

Isaiah 58:6 begins with “the kind of fasting I have chosen.” Isaiah then proceeds with phrases like “loose the chains of,” “untie the cords of,” and “break every yoke.” What are the chains, cords, and yoke that you are holding on to? What do you need to fast from so that you can share Jesus with others through your words AND actions?

These questions lend themselves to a question we often are challenged with during the season of Lent.

“What are you giving up for Lent?”

However, to refocus our mindset, this question could be reworded as: “What are you sacrificing for Jesus?” “What are you intentionally choosing for Lent?”

Lent is supposed to be a time when we prepare and reflect for the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And, just like the word “fasting,” the words “prepare” and “reflect” can be replaced with other words or intentional choices.

Isaiah reminds us that while we are called to prepare for and reflect on the grace and freedom from sin that Jesus selflessly gives us on Easter, we're already fasting. Isaiah doesn't ask what we are fasting from. He doesn't ask what you gave up for Lent? He says, "Is not this the kind of fasting I have CHOSEN?" When we choose Jesus, we fast from people and things that don't point to Jesus.

Isaiah also tells us that if we CHOOSE Jesus, we are choosing to love, share with, and provide for others as He does.

So, here's the best question I could ask you in your preparations and reflections during the season of Lent: How are you demonstrating that you choose Jesus this season? How are you sharing, providing for and loving others as Jesus does for you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father,
Please fill our heads and our hearts with what You would choose for us. Do not let us be tempted to shut out who You say we are and do not let us be "chickens" who miss out on the opportunity to show and/or tell others who You are and who You've made us to be as children of Your Image! Help us in our preparations and reflections in our Lord Jesus, Christ and bring to light the ways You call us to serve You as a whole and as individuals.
Amen.