

# Lent 2025

*a guide for the season*

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**HILLDALE**  
UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH

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# The Season of Lent: An Introduction

Lent is a season of forty days, not including Sundays, that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The name “Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, meaning “lengthen,” referring to the longer days of spring. In many other languages, the name of this season emphasizes either its forty-day length (*cuaresma* in Spanish and Tagalog, *carême* in French, *quaresima* in Italian) or its focus on fasting (*Fastenzeit* in German, *fastan* in Swedish, *paasto* in Finnish, *posta* in Russian). Regardless of the name, Lent is a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Historically, Lent began as a time of fasting and preparation for baptism, particularly for those new to the Christian faith. Over time, it also became a season for repentance and spiritual renewal for all Christians. The First Sunday of Lent recalls Jesus’ time of temptation in the wilderness, while the Sixth Sunday (Passion/Palm Sunday) marks his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, setting the stage for his suffering and death. The readings during Lent, especially leading up to Passion/Palm Sunday, focus on themes of baptism and discipleship, connecting us to the season’s original purpose. Because Sundays are always considered “mini Easters,” even in Lent, the season’s penitential tone is balanced with the joyful expectation of resurrection.

# **Holy Week & The Great Three Days (Triduum)**

Holy Week, the final week of Lent, begins with Passion/Palm Sunday and leads us through Jesus' last days, suffering, and death. This journey continues into the Great Three Days, also known as the Triduum (from sunset on Holy Thursday to sunset on Easter Sunday). These days are the heart of our faith, proclaiming the mystery of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection.

During the Triduum, we follow Jesus from the upper room (Holy Thursday) to the cross (Good Friday), then to the tomb, and finally to the joy of the empty tomb (Easter Sunday). This time is best understood as one continuous act of worship, beginning with Holy Communion on Holy Thursday and culminating in the Easter celebrations. Some Christian communities observe this time with prayer vigils from Holy Thursday evening through the first Easter service, often accompanied by fasting as a way of deepening the spiritual journey.

Lent calls us to renew our faith, turn toward God, and prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter morning, when we proclaim once again: Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

*Adapted from Discipleship Ministries, Introduction to the Season of Lent.*

# Why "do" Lent?

Our lives are filled with distractions that move our focus away from God and a life with Christ. We may try to fill the emptiness inside us with mindless TV, meaningless chatter, stimulants, alcohol, an excessive number of activities, or other irrelevant things. These distractions provide temporary relief, but never satisfy the deep longing of our souls.

Lent offers a great invitation to turn our lives around, to re-focus on God, and to journey more closely with Jesus. Through these 40 days, while we work on developing a new lifestyle, God works on changing our hearts.

I invite you to try one/some of these practices for Lent:

**FASTING:** Though some people have been known to go without food for days, that is not the only way to fast. You can fast by cutting out some of the things in your life that distract you from God. Some use the whole 40 days to fast from candy, tv, soft drinks, cigarettes or meat as a way to purify their bodies and lives. You might choose to skip one meal a day and use that time to pray. Or you can give up some other activity so you may spend more time enjoying God's creation.

The question you may want to ask is, **"what do I need to let go of in order to focus more closely on God?"**

There are many things that clutter our lives and calendars. Lent calls us to simplify our lives so we can focus on what really matters.

**SERVICE:** Lent is a time not only to give up some things, but to take something on for Christ. Lent is a season that reminds us that we serve God by serving others. So, during this season we can commit to serve the poor, the forgotten, the hurting, the hungry, the "invisible other." We can commit to seek the way of peace, without diving into people-pleasing. We can commit to seek the way of love, even when that calls for a love that speaks difficult truths. We can commit to seek the way of justice, without giving way to vengeance.

There are practical steps we can take during Lent to serve God and others:

- You can collect food for the Blessing Box, Urban Ministries, Manna Cafe Ministries, or Loaves & Fishes.
- You can volunteer at Project Transformation as a tutor.
- You can join the voices of other United Methodists and advocate for reform, justice, and equity in our nation and community. ([www.umcjustice.org](http://www.umcjustice.org), [www.gcorr.org](http://www.gcorr.org), [www.twkumc.org/church-and-society](http://www.twkumc.org/church-and-society))
- You can become involved with a new ministry in the church.
- You can commit to get to know new people and develop new relationships.

**PRAYER:** Lent is a time when we can also grow in the life of prayer. There is no discipline more important for the life of faith. The great Methodist missionary E. Stanley Jones,

emphasizing the importance of prayer said, *"If I had one gift, and only one gift, to make to the Christian Church, I would offer the gift of prayer, for everything follows from prayer."* Prayer connects us to the source of our strength and power. Prayer connects us with God and it can also connect us with others. Through prayer we remember that we are not self sufficient, we depend on God for our very survival—the air we breath, the water we drink, the food we eat are not our creation. These are gifts from God.

During the Season of Lent we can deepen our prayer practices, growing in this discipline that gives air to our souls. Here are a few things you may want to consider:

- Establish a consistent time for prayer.
- Take prayer walks. Walk around your neighborhood, observing the environment and lifting the concerns of your community to God.
- Use your artistic gifts as a prayer. Read the scriptures, meditate on the text, and prayerfully respond with drawing, painting, poem, song, or other artistic expression.
- Walk through a prayer labyrinth.
- Take a silent retreat.
- Spend time meditating.
- Practice listening.

All these and many more are ways to grow in our connection with God.

# Connecting Lent & Daily Living

by Daniel Benedict

Lent is a time to prepare for Easter. It is a necessary prelude. The death and resurrection of Christ are true whether or not I prepare for Easter. However, without my heart and life being ready, I may not experience the depth and power of Christ's death and resurrection.

So with my brothers and sisters, I commit myself to disciplines for conversion from sin and death to love and life in Jesus Christ. With the aid of the list below, I make the following commitments to discipline and growth for the next six weeks:

## Inward and Personal Disciplines

- Spend time in solitude each day.
- Participate in Bible Study or Join a Sunday School Class.
- Read a book for inner growth.
- Read through the gospels (Matthew, Mark, **Luke** and John).
- Begin to keep a journal of prayer concerns, questions, reading.
- Focus on thanksgiving, rather than on asking, in prayer.
- Give myself a gift of 3 hours to do something I've always wanted to do.
- Find a way to go to bed earlier or sleep in so I get enough rest.
- Make a list of people with whom I need to be reconciled. Pray for them and let Jesus guide me in my thinking and feeling toward them.
- Take one hour to inventory my priorities and plan how I will reorder them.
- Give up a grudge or resentment of a past event.
- Forgive someone who has hurt me.
- Re-focus my life by \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



# Outward and Social Disciplines

\_\_\_ Take on some loving task: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Visit a home-bound neighbor or church member.

\_\_\_ Write a letter of gratitude to a person who has touched my life.

\_\_\_ Go on the Spiritual Retreat, date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Listen and respond to Christ's call to a ministry of service: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Go to coffee or a meal with someone I want to know better.

\_\_\_ Begin to recycle waste from my home and workplace.

\_\_\_ Volunteer at \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ Say "NO" to something that is a waste of money or time.

\_\_\_ Decide to become a member of the church.

\_\_\_ Schedule a time to speak with the pastor or a church leader about serving.

\_\_\_ Other outward and social promptings: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## As a way of being accountable, I will either:

\_\_\_ Share my intentions for Lent with my Sunday School Class or Bible Study.

\_\_\_ Share my plan with at least one person and follow-up about the experience of Lent during Holy Week.

\_\_\_\_\_

(sign)

\_\_\_\_\_

(date)

*Keep this for reference during the coming weeks.*

# Reading the Gospel of Luke

During the season of Lent, let us to join together, reading the Gospel of Luke. Below you will find a reading schedule.

**To receive daily reading emails and a weekly reflection, please go to [www.hilldaleumc.org/lent](http://www.hilldaleumc.org/lent).**

## WEEK 1:

- Ash Wednesday, March 5: **Luke 1:1-38**
- Thursday, March 6: **Luke 1:39-80**
- Friday, March 7: **Luke 2:1-40**
- Saturday, March 8: **Luke 2:41-3:20 & Reflection Email**
- Sunday, March 9: **Sermon Guide (email)**

## WEEK 2:

- Monday, March 10: **Luke 3:21-4:13**
- Tuesday, March 11: **Luke 4:14-44**
- Wednesday, March 12: **Luke 5:1-26**
- Thursday, March 13: **Luke 5:27-6:16**
- Friday, March 14: **Luke 6:17-49**
- Saturday, March 15: **Luke 7:1-35 & Reflection Email**
- Sunday, March 16: **Sermon Guide (email)**

## WEEK 3:

- Monday, March 17: **Luke 7:36-8:3**
- Tuesday, March 18: **Luke 8:4-21**
- Wednesday, March 19: **Luke 8:22-56**
- Thursday, March 20: **Luke 9:1-27**
- Friday, March 21: **Luke 9:28-62**
- Saturday, March 22: **Luke 10:1-24 & Reflection Email**
- Sunday, March 23: **Sermon Guide (email)**

## **WEEK 4:**

- Monday, March 24: **Luke 10:25-11:13**
- Tuesday, March 25: **Luke 11:14-54**
- Wednesday, March 26: **Luke 12:1-34**
- Thursday, March 27: **Luke 12:35-59**
- Friday, March 28: **Luke 13:1-35**
- Saturday, March 29: **Luke 14:1-35 & Reflection Email**
- Sunday, March 30: **Sermon Guide (email)**

## **WEEK 5:**

- Monday, March 31: **Luke 15:1-32**
- Tuesday, April 1: **Luke 16:1-31**
- Wednesday, April 2: **Luke 17:1-37**
- Thursday, April 3: **Luke 18:1-17**
- Friday, April 4: **Luke 18:18-43**
- Saturday, April 5: **Luke 19:1-28 & Reflection Email**
- Sunday, April 6: **Sermon Guide (email)**

## **WEEK 6:**

- Monday, April 7: **Luke 19:29-48**
- Tuesday, April 8: **Luke 20:1-19**
- Wednesday, April 9: **Luke 20:20-44**
- Thursday, April 10: **Luke 20:45-21:28**
- Friday, April 11: **Luke 21:29-22:23**
- Saturday, April 12: **Luke 22:24-53 & Reflection Email**
- Palm Sunday, April 13: **Sermon Guide (email)**

## **HOLY WEEK:**

- Monday, April 14: **Luke 22:54-71**
- Tuesday, April 15: **Luke 23:1-25**
- Wednesday, April 16: **Luke 23:26-56**
- Maundy Thursday, April 17: **Luke 24:1-12**
- Good Friday, April 18: **Luke 24:13-35**
- Holy Saturday, April 19: **Luke 24:36-53 & Reflection Email**
- Easter Sunday, April 20: **Sermon Guide (email)**

# *Intro to the Gospel of Luke*

## **A GUIDE FOR LENTEN READING**

### **Setting the Scene: Luke's Unique Contribution**

The Gospel of Luke presents a compelling and detailed account of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Unlike the other Gospels, Luke explicitly frames his work as an orderly and carefully researched account (Luke 1:1-4) of these events.

Though we could not consider Luke's writing biographical by modern standards, he writes with a historical consciousness, offering a broad narrative that connects Jesus' story to both Israel's past and the life of the early church.

Among the Gospel writers, Luke is often described as "the historian." The work he presents is not a detached historical record meant to inform. Luke's work is theological and pastoral, intended to transform, encourage faith, and evoke discipleship. This Gospel is the first volume of a two-part work, with the Book of Acts serving as its continuation. Acts shows how the message of Jesus spread from Jerusalem "to the end of the earth."

### **The Author and His Perspective**

Christian tradition identifies Luke as a companion of the Apostle Paul, described as a physician (Colossians 4:14). His writing exhibits a polished Greek style and an interest in

medical and social themes, but more importantly, it reflects a deep concern for inclusion—particularly of the marginalized. Luke keenly highlights Jesus' compassion for the poor, women, Gentiles, and those on the fringes of society.

In his writings, Luke shows a deep awareness of the early church's struggles. He bridges the world of Jesus' ministry to the Jews and the growing Gentile Christian movement, addressing the church's evolving identity and mission. This makes Luke's Gospel particularly relevant for a diverse and questioning community.

### **Jesus in Luke: The Climax of Salvation History**

Luke presents Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel while also emphasizing that salvation is extended to all people. He traces Jesus' genealogy back to Adam (Luke 3:38), reinforcing that Christ's mission is for all humanity, not just Israel. Jesus' ministry is framed as the fulfillment of prophetic expectations, as seen in his reading from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), where he declares that he has come to bring good news to the poor, freedom for the oppressed, and sight to the blind.

One of Luke's major themes is reversal—where the last become first, the lowly are lifted, and the proud are brought down (Luke 1:51-53). The parables unique to Luke, such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), illustrate God's radical grace and the upside-down nature of God's kingdom.

## Themes to Watch for During Lent

As we journey through Lent, the Gospel of Luke invites us to reflect on several key themes:

- **The Kingdom of God:** Luke presents Jesus as both proclaiming and embodying the kingdom, yet also navigating the tension between the kingdom's arrival and its future fulfillment.
- **Discipleship and Cost:** Luke frequently challenges would-be disciples to count the cost of following Jesus (Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33), a fitting challenge for our Lenten journey of self-examination and sacrifice.
- **Prayer and the Holy Spirit:** Luke emphasizes Jesus' habit of prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit in his ministry (Luke 3:21-22; 5:16; 6:12; 22:39-46). As we enter Lent, his example calls us to deepen our own spiritual practices.
- **Compassion and Inclusion:** Luke's Jesus breaks social barriers, showing special concern for outsiders, sinners, and the marginalized (Luke 7:36-50; 19:1-10). Lent invites us to reflect on how we extend Christ's hospitality to others.

## Reading Luke with the Early Church in Mind

Luke's Gospel was written in a time of transition for the early church. As Jewish and Gentile believers wrestled with their identity and mission, Luke offered a unifying vision—Jesus as the Savior for all. His Gospel was not just history but a theological reflection on how the early church was to live in light of Jesus' life and teaching.

As we read Luke during Lent, we too are invited to see Jesus not just as a historical figure but as the one who still calls us to radical faithfulness, justice, and love. May this Gospel inspire us to deepen our discipleship, embrace the hope of Christ's resurrection, and prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter.

In Christ,



Rev. Jefferson M. Furtado

## **WANT TO GO DEEPER? CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES.**

### ***Genesis to Revelation Luke Participant***

#### ***A Comprehensive Verse-by-Verse Exploration of the Bible***

By Horace R. Weaver

### ***Discovering Luke***

By Joel B. Green

### ***Immersion Bible Studies Luke***

By John Indermark, Dr. Emerson B. Powery

### ***Life Lessons from Luke***

By Max Lucado

### ***Living Footnotes in the Gospel of Luke***

*Luke's Reliance on Eyewitness Sources*

By Luuk Van de Weghe

### ***Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws***

By Adam Hamilton

### ***Luke for Everyone***

By Nicholas Thomas (N.T.) Wright