

2016-2-10-Christ Church Anglican
Ash Wednesday service—the beginning of Lent

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Entering the Rhythms of the Christian Life

Lent is known as “fasting time”. Why fast?

To understand the role the practices of Lent play, I must understand the overall flow of the Christian life.

On the cross Christ made **provision**

- 1 - For my guilt to be removed
- 2 - For the power of sin in our behavior to be broken

But this provision must be **accessed**. The heart (will, choice, intention) must choose.

- 1 - To remove guilt I bring my sins to the cross
 - 2 - To break sin’s power in my behavior I embark on a **process**
- + of trusting
 - + of obeying

How serious are the consequences of my entrenched, destructive behaviors?
What will be the results down the road if I avoid Christ’s provision?

The process of accessing Christ’s provision is a **rhythm** resulting in the formation of the person in Christlikeness

- + I choose to die to—to lay aside—the self-life
- + I choose to access Christ’s life—life in the Spirit

In laying aside the self-life, I am greatly helped by **spiritual disciplines**—e.g., fasting, prayer, giving, etc. They assist me in opening up my inner life to the healing, transforming Presence of God.

- + They don’t give merit; they offer training.
- + They are like exercises athletes use; they increase my ability to seek God.
- + They must be freely chosen; they can’t be imposed.
- + We learn them from Jesus and our Judeo-Christian fathers and mothers.