

Sermon Outline - Sun, March 27, 2022 – Need Less, Give More
Isaiah 58; Matthew 3:1-4

Keyword Summary – Fasting; Jubilee; Consumption; Giving

Overview –

This month as we look at Lent we have been leaning into the title Need Less to Give More. We will be carrying it over into next month and this month we have been looking at fasting. We have talked about fasting as not being deprivation but instead a chosen disruption that invites us into deeper empathy, allows us to see what is essential, invites us into interdependence. We also talked about fasting not being performative but practice and practical.

Exegesis –

- Reminder that Isaiah is one of the most popular texts because it lays out some of the key tensions and dramas that the children of Israel were struggling with – some that we continue to wrestle with
- The Isaiah passage illustrates a key tension in the Bible about the maintenance of religion and the commitment to God’s Jubilee system. (Relationship with God, relationship with the land, relationship with the tribe and those in need)
- People recognize that they need God in order to be safe and strong, so the religious system gets tied to the power structures
- Latin word religio – to link or to bind. The connection to God which facilitates the connection to others and to the land. Not just the ones we are supposed to connect with. (blood family – although we need help there too, but all God’s children), but those in need
- This tension is one that continues to this day. The creating of religious structures tied to political structures, the focus on elaborate ritual that does not orient people towards Jubilee – creates perverse religion and ties us to the wrong things.
- How do we undo that – fasting is a part of the solution IF it is seen as both practice and practical

Key Points

- 1 **Practice** – plugging into God’s wavelength.
- 2 **Practice** – committing to do things over and over until they become natural (Allen Iverson)
- 3 **Practical** – on the other side you become more like Christ (in what you see, in how you think and in what you do) – this is key to Isaiah’s point. If your rituals don’t uplift the poor and the vulnerable then they ain’t the right rituals. Right practice has a practical effect on your behavior

This is not to say that we will all get it right, or that it will happen overnight but it is to say that we should be focus on the right signs that our practice is working.

Questions

1. What really helps you to plug into God’s wavelength? Is it a struggle to get there? What do you need more of or less of to allow yourself space to really connect with God?
2. What is your relationship with spiritual practice and religion? Have you seen it be transformative in your life and/or have you seen it be used in destructive ways that you are trying to heal from or avoid? Where might you need to unpack your relationship with religion to enter spiritual practice in a new or different way?
3. Where are you seeing practical outgrowth from your practice? Are there times you feel led to act that you second guess yourself? How can you create space for more practical action to flow from your spiritual practice? (ex. Is there something your fasting is teaching you that you don’t need. Could you give it away?)