

4th Sunday of Lent  
The Fasting God has Chosen  
Isaiah 58 & Matthew 6

- I. The Trap of Religion  
Is. 58:1-5; Mt. 6:1-21
  - A. It becomes an Act  
Mt. 6:2,5,16; Amos 5:21-23
  - B. It becomes a Transaction  
Is. 58:3; Mt. 6:2,5,16; Luke 16:29
  - C. It is Empty  
Is. 58:3-5; Mt. 6:2b, 5b, 16b
- II. The Gift of Worship  
Mt. 6:19-21
  - A. It Begins with God  
Mt. 6:4,6,18; Is. 58:6
  - B. It is a Renovation of the Heart  
Is. 58:6-7; Rom. 12:1-2, Mt. 6:3,6,17
  - C. It Ends with Grace  
Is. 58:6-12; Mt. 6:21
- III. The Gospel about Fasting
  - A. Not a Command, but an Invitation
  - B. Jesus is the True Faster  
Is. 58:6-9
  - C. Being Drawn into God's Heart  
Is. 58:9; Mt. 6:9-10

Questions for Further Reflection

1. Kid's Question: Have you ever pretended to be different so people would like you?
2. What has been your experience with organized religion?
3. Think of a recent experience when you were tempted to "act" like a Christian. What motivated that feeling?
4. What relationships in your life are transactional? If God were asked how you treat your relationship with Him, what would He say?
5. What things do you do "in secret" to build your life of worship?
6. What is your reaction to the idea of "afflicting your soul"?
7. Has your relationship with God and experience with the church made you emptier or more grace filled?
8. What might God be inviting you to in this season of Lent?
9. What are some ways that you can become more attuned to God's heart?
10. Take some time this week to sit with those questions of Buechner's (included on the back). What do the answers reveal to you? What might God be saying to you through your answers?

After being baptized by John in the river Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent forty days asking himself the question what it meant to be Jesus. During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves.

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?

To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become. It can be a pretty depressing business all in all, but if sack-cloth and ashes are at the start of it, something like Easter may be at the end.

Frederick Buechner- Wishful Thinking