

Jeff's Jottings

The Crucial Voices of Lent, Week 5

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This holy season of Lent is intended in part as a time of penitence and reflection; in the words of the text from Isaiah many of us heard on Ash Wednesday, a time to take seriously those means by which we might "be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."

During Lent, then, I am using Jottings as a voice that would call us (myself included) to reflection, to faith, to action, as repairers and restorers. A voice that challenges us, and comforts us. A voice that may be hard to hear, but even harder to ignore. Not simply my voice but that of others.

You've heard this before: you rarely see red cars on the road until you buy a red car, and then suddenly there seem to be red cars everywhere. Why? Because now you're focused on red cars, and the way our brain works, you experience more of whatever you focus on.

Last Friday in Jottings, I wrote about feasting and fasting, and how we more often associate Lent with fasting than with feasting. On Sunday, I was privileged to worship with the congregation at Resurrection MPLS, a cooperative ministry of Aldrich Avenue Presbyterian Church and City of Lakes Covenant — the vibrant current expression of our 100-plus-year-old congregation in south Minneapolis. And in a prayer during worship offered by Matt Anderson, their associate pastor of discipleship and local mission, I heard moving words about exactly that: fasting and feasting.

So fasting and feasting again will be our Lenten thought today, expressed below in the nearly century-old words of William Arthur Ward. With thanks to the leaders and people of Resurrection MPLS, and with wonder for what I might now see this coming week that I have heretofore missed.

Fast from judging others;

Feast on the Christ indwelling them.

Fast from emphasis on differences;

Feast on the unity of all life.

Fast from apparent darkness;

Feast on the reality of light.

Fast from thoughts of illness;

Feast on the healing power of God.

Fast from words that pollute;

Feast on phrases that purify.

Fast from discontent;

Feast on gratitude.

Fast from anger;

Feast on patience.

Fast from pessimism;

Feast on optimism.

Fast from worry;

Feast on divine order.

Fast from complaining;

Feast on appreciation.

Fast from negatives;

Feast on affirmatives.

Fast from unrelenting pressures;

Feast on unceasing prayer.

Fast from hostility;

Feast on non-resistance.

Fast from bitterness;

Feast on forgiveness.

Fast from self-concern;

Feast on compassion for others.

Fast from personal anxiety;

Feast on eternal Truth.

Fast from discouragement;

Feast on hope.

Fast from facts that depress;

Feast on truths that uplift.

Fast from lethargy;

Feast on enthusiasm.

Fast from suspicion;

Feast on truth.

Fast from thoughts that weaken;
Feast on promises that inspire.
Fast from shadows of sorrow;
Feast on the sunlight of serenity.
Fast from idle gossip;
Feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from problems that overwhelm;
Feast on prayer that undergirds.

—written by William Arthur Ward, 1921-1994.