

Life is this strange, tender mix, isn't it?

Joy and sorrow. Love and loss. Big wins and even bigger failures. We cling tightly to the beautiful moments, but then the phone rings, a diagnosis drops, or some creeping ache reminds us that everything—*everything*—is so much more fragile than we'd like to admit. Life can be too much. And Lent is the season where we sit in that heaviness. For 40 days, we stop pretending things will suddenly get better and face the truth: life is fragile, and so are we. Lent invites us to stop pretending we can hold it all together and instead sit with the weight of what we carry—the grief, the regrets, the messes we can't untangle, no matter how much we try.

Here's the hardest part: central to being human is to carry the weight of our own mortality. We love the joy and triumph of Easter morning, but first, we have to sit with Good Friday, when God appears to be on the losing team. Jesus, who we look to for hope and healing, suffers and dies. His pain is real, just like ours. We can't rush past it. We can't skip to the good part, because it's through the deepest hurt that we begin to understand what it means to be fully human.

This Lenten season, we'll wrestle with these paradoxes together. Our Sunday messages will explore how our human condition is not an easy one... and yet our messy human condition is exactly where God's grace meets us. A daily devotional will be available to guide us, exploring some of the hardest parts of being human. The devotional will offer Scripture, a reflection, a response prompt, and a blessing to remind us that grace has a way of sneaking in, even when life feels impossible (kind of like finding your phone after you've torn the house apart for the fifth time). And for those who experience God through music, a song is included with each day, accessed via a link to a Spotify playlist.

Weekly small group sessions (morning and evening) will also be offered, with each session featuring scripture to read and reflect on, a brief interview exploring an aspect of our humanness, discussion questions, and a prayer to close our time together. Prayerfully, these small groups will provide an opportunity to honestly acknowledge how heavy the world can feel, while also holding hope for what might emerge. Because when we engage the hard part, something else happens: we get to the *good* part.

-Adapted from The Hardest Part: Hurt We Carry, Hope We Find, Daily Guide Lent 2025, Kate Bowler

Small Group Sessions will be held on Thursdays (10am and 6:30pm in the Parlor), beginning on March 6th. Watch for further information.