

Possible Themes for Lent Year A

Themes can help us to focus on different aspects of Lent. Lent has traditionally been a time of repentance, of turning back to God, of giving up things that tie us to this world to look to the cross. Historically, however, the Sundays of Lent were not included in the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter and were seen as “mini Easters,” times to break from the fast, celebrate the Resurrection and claim the new life in Christ.

As you think of a theme for Lent this year, take some time to reflect on your congregation. What is your congregation’s story? Are you in a time of transition? Leadership change? In a time of spiritual plateau? What message of hope in the resurrection does your congregation need to hear this Lent?

Possible Themes for Preaching and Worship:

Spring Elements: Seeds, Earth, Water, Sand, Stone, Wood (to be used with the Lenten Candle Lighting Liturgy, Year A), corresponding with the Gospel readings from the Revised Common Lectionary for each Sunday in Year A.

Water: Historically, the two most important feast days in the Church were Epiphany and Easter, when baptisms were celebrated. Advent and Lent were both seasons to prepare for baptism and new life. Think of all the Biblical lessons involving water: Creation, The Flood, The Jordan River, Crossing the Red Sea, Water from the Rock, The Woman at the Well, Washing the Disciples Feet, Walking on the Water, Calming of the Sea, etc.

The Seven Deadly Social Sins: Gandhi’s Seven Deadly Social Sins
(The First Baptist Church in Beverly, MA shared this idea a few years ago):

- Politics without principle
- Wealth without work
- Commerce without morality
- Pleasure without conscience
- Education without character
- Science without humanity
- Worship without science

(could start the week of Ash Wednesday to end on Holy Week)

The Six Days of Creation: Focusing on the rebirth of Spring, looking at how God’s promises have been revealed throughout creation (April 22nd, Earth Day, is Good Friday this year).

Spiritual Practices: Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving, Meditation, Solitude, and Pilgrimage—focusing on the many different forms of Christian spiritual disciplines that are found in the Bible.

Wilderness and Wandering: As Lent is often seen as a reflection of Jesus’ journey into the wilderness for forty days, one can begin with Jesus in the wilderness, Abraham as a wandering Aramean, Moses and the Israelites wandering in the desert, the people in the wilderness of exile, and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (not exactly the wilderness but a place where Jesus felt certainly alone—an example of how we might find wilderness times in our own lives)

Forgiveness: Explore Jesus’ teachings on forgiveness as in this season we repent and turn from sin: Matthew 6:7-15 (Forgive as God forgives), Matthew 5:21-26 (Reconciliation), Luke 15:11-32 (Restoration), John 7:53-8:11 (No Condemnation), Mark 11:20-26 (Faith and Forgiveness), and Luke 23:32-43 (Pardon).

Whatever theme you choose, you can take an idea and brainstorm it scripturally, such as the Water theme above. Sin can be a theme, or Covenant, or New Life, etc.