

## **Parables Series: Lent 2019 Candle Lighting Liturgy**

Throughout the season of Lent, on each Sunday we will light a candle. Though Lent is often seen as a time of repentance, of fasting and prayer, of solemn reverence, Sundays were seen as mini-Easters, days of celebrating Christ's resurrection. To hold these two in balance, a candle is lit each Sunday for celebration, while still taking time to ponder and reflect on our journey of faith. Lent comes from the old English, "to lengthen" and refers to the lengthening of days in the springtime (in the northern hemisphere). As the days lengthen, daylight increases, and we see the beauty of God's creation break through, we light these candles as a reminder of the journey the world is going through, and the journey we are on with God.

I suggest six large pillar candles, but any candles will do. You may also choose to light a seventh candle on Easter.

### **First Sunday of Lent: Starting in the Wilderness**

We begin our Lenten journey with Jesus in the wilderness. There is the wilderness of loneliness. The wilderness of struggling to meet our daily needs. The wilderness of doubts, about ourselves, others, or God. The wilderness of feeling powerless, of having no control. The wilderness of evil, of systems of oppression. What is the wilderness you are in, right now? As we light the first candle, reflect on the wilderness you are in.

(light the first candle)

Prayer:

Light of the World, guide us through the wilderness. Remind us that we are not alone. In this season of Lent, may we turn back to You, and find You are right with us. Light of the World, show us the way. Amen.

### **Second Sunday of Lent: Stopping Along The Way**

On our Lenten journey, we are reminded that at times we need to stop focusing on ourselves and look to the needs of others. Sometimes its inconvenient; other times, it could be dangerous. We may ask ourselves who is worthy of our aid, or even our compassion. Our courage is tested when strangers ask for help, especially when their own struggles, with alcoholism or poverty, make us uncomfortable. What holds you back from stopping to help? As we light the second candle, reflect on what is holding you back.

(light the second candle)

Prayer:

Light of the World, show us our neighbors. Remind us that our neighbors are not always in houses, and may have needs we cannot imagine. In this season of Lent, may we ask ourselves the question "who is my neighbor" and struggle to answer with action. Light of the World, show us how to love our neighbor. Amen.

### **Third Sunday of Lent: When We Think We've Gone Far Enough**

Sometimes we think we've done enough for others, or we've done as much as we can. We focus on ourselves, on our own salvation, on our own needs being met. When we focus on ourselves, often we find we aren't satisfied, especially when we use the measures of the world. We strive for more things, and we are never filled. Jesus calls us to strive for the reign of God, for heavenly treasures, and to become last of all and servant of all. Where do you need to turn away from the ways of the world, and turn back to God's ways? As we light the third candle, reflect on how the measures of worldly success have held you back.

(light the third candle)

Prayer:

Light of the World, show us Your ways. Remind us that we are helping to build up the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. In this season of Lent, may we leave the measures of worldly success behind and cling to the reign of God, and live into God's ways of love and justice. Light of the World, remind us that we, Your children, are loved and valued far beyond all worldly riches. Amen.

### **Fourth Sunday of Lent: Straying From The Path**

We all stray from God's ways now and then. We often pray to turn back to God and to return to God's ways. But sometimes, we are called to stray from the well-beaten path and go where God needs us to be. Sometimes, sticking too close to what we think is right creates a religious club. Jesus went after the lost sheep, leaving the other ninety-nine behind. Where is God calling you out of your comfort zone? As we light the fourth candle, reflect on where God may be asking you to leave the traveled road, to go where God needs you to be.

(light the fourth candle)

Prayer:

Light of the World, spark in us the courage to go where You need us. Remind us that it's okay to leave what we know, as long as You are with us. Help us to go to those who are outcast, who feel marginalized, and to be in solidarity with all Your children who have been left out. Light of the World, be with us, whether on the mountain roads, or the valley of the shadow, and remind us we are not alone. Amen.

### **Fifth Sunday of Lent: Taking the Risky Route**

People will lie to you. They will try to cheat you out of your money. They will gain your trust and then hurt you. They will disappoint you. It's a risk to love our neighbor. It's a risk to follow Jesus, who keeps leading us to those on the sides of the road, those who have squandered everything they were given. It's a risk to keep loving others despite knowing we will be hurt when we love. However, Jesus calls us to love, and to take the risk. This doesn't mean we allow ourselves to be walked all over, but it does mean that sometimes we give the benefit of the doubt. Sometimes we risk being hurt in order to love, for Jesus risked, and gave his own life, for us. As we light the fifth candle, reflect on where you need to let your guard down, so you can let God in.

(light the fifth candle)

Prayer:

Light of the World, shine bright when the world has failed us. Remind us that You know our pain, You know where we have been wounded, for You Yourself were wounded. Help us to know it's okay to have trepidation, but to step out in faith, to risk ourselves for You. Light of the World, may your light blaze bright around us, through our pain, and lead us into hope. Amen.

### **Palm Sunday: A Different Way**

We've come to the end of our Lenten journey, following Jesus to Jerusalem, and learning from the parables that Jesus taught his disciples. We also have learned from the stories we've told ourselves—stories that make us feel better, but do not always lead us to the reign of God. Stories in which we feel we can't do anything more, stories in which our fear holds us back, stories in which there's too much to risk. But there is a different way. We can leave those stories behind, and with God write a new story: a story in which we go into the wilderness boldly, where we help our neighbors in need no matter who they are. A story in which we are filled with new energy to share what we have with others, in which we're okay with leaving the familiar behind to seek out those who have been marginalized. A story in which we are willing to risk because we know God is with us, and that nothing can hold us back. As we light our final candle for Lent, reflect on the story God desires for your life, and what you have learned this season.

(light the sixth candle)

Prayer:

Light of the World, show us a new way to live. As we recall Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, may we boldly and humbly live into Your story. May we truly love You and love one another as You have taught us. Light of the World, shine in us, in all times, for Your light is with us always, no matter what. Amen.