

Not to be served, but to serve

The first day of March: St David's Day, when the Welsh celebrate their great patron saint. A teaching, preaching, doctrinally orthodox, church-planting bishop. Three cheers! (And he was Welsh.)

This year the first day of March is also Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. As I have written before, and almost certainly will do again, I am a strong believer in the Christian Year. It serves us well as a teaching tool, as a liturgical framework, and as an aid to the disciplines of our discipleship. Lent matters.

I gave up coffee one Lent: a memorable but painful experience, which taught me to my horror that I was addicted to caffeine. In my mid teens I once succeeded in giving up sweets right through Lent - for me at that time a remarkable achievement: at least, I thought so at the time. But what I actually did was put the sweets I would have eaten into a drawer. Once Easter came, the sweets went quite quickly. Maybe that was an act of self-discipline. But it wasn't a sacrifice; merely deferred gratification. In retrospect, it boosted my ego rather than my spiritual growth.



Lent can and should be a time to get our spiritual disciplines on track: giving, prayer, and fasting (in that order) are the great three in the Sermon on the Mount. All three are examples of self-denial, indicators that we are trusting in and relying on God rather than ourselves. But when you get into them in depth, they are more about serving others than growing ourselves. The danger of the Lenten disciplines is that we can be too introspective. Like Jesus, we are here not to be served, but to serve.

Have a good Lent, as we walk the way of the cross together. May your Lent, and mine, be an opportunity to give ourselves in service to our lord, and to one another.

With Lenten blessings

+ Donald

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