

# Lent

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## 40 DAYS OF RENEWAL



*My dear friends in Christ,*

*Who are you?*

*Identity is so very important. Who we are dictates what we do and what those things mean. Identity determines who we do the things we do with. It is critical to our way of being. It is also very fragile. Our identities are bombarded daily with opportunities to skip over, change, or improve upon who we are, or to become someone different. Which is one of the reasons that Lent is so important.*

*After its start in repentance and ashes, the Lenten season begins in the wilderness with Jesus at the end of a 40 day fast; tired, hungry, fearful and vulnerable. This has been a time away on the heels of his baptism, where we heard the heavenly voice announcing "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We have it on pretty good authority that Jesus' identity and purpose is that of the son of God, the beloved. But when we find Jesus in the wilderness, it is that very identity that is being called into question. The temptation of Jesus begins with the planting of destructive doubt as to his own identity. The statements by the tempter beginning with "IF you're really the Son of God..." provide a moment for Jesus to doubt his own identity. To live inside the 'if' for a time, and to struggle with who he's meant to be. They're immediately followed by an invitation married to a false promise: Turn the stones to bread. Feed yourself instead of thousands later. Imagine how good it will feel. Throw yourself off the temple. Angels will catch you in full sight of the faithful. Imagine how good it will feel. Worship me, not God. You can have everything you'll ever want without the hassle of being the Messiah. Imagine how good it will feel. And yet we see Jesus resist.*

*When we read this today, I hope we don't dismiss it. Because this goes on every day for us. We're put in situations where we're tempted to question our own identity as the beloveds of God. Our sacred identities take a beating daily, and that makes us tired, hungry, fearful and vulnerable. And this is where it gets dicey. We don't like to feel that way, so we react. Sometimes we react by trying to change who we've been made to be. And that never ends well. Don't do that. Resist.*

*But more often, in that vulnerable state we become more open to the trap of questioning the sacred identity of other people, and their belovedness. Sadly, the moments where we're tempted to question to sacred belovedness of other people are almost always supported by 'alternative facts' about that person or about a group of people that support the momentary doubt. And there's always an invitation to act on the divisive fear ignited by destructive doubt and alternative facts. Neighbour to neighbour. Nation to nation. Through the vehicles of race. Religion. Gender. Culture. Sexual orientation. Creed. Nationality. Personality. Identity. May we be aware of who we are as the beloveds of God. May we also be aware that if we give in to the temptation to doubt, question, fear, exclude, fight, or ignore any of the other beloved ones, we depart from the biggest call of our lives: To love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves.*

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike +". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.