

Dear everyone

How wonderful to be in February: the shortest month, increasing daylight, signs of new life with budding leaves on trees, clumps of snowdrops and carpets of yellow and purple crocuses. Especially after January which, for many, was a long and dreary month after the festivities finished, the lights switched off, decorations taken down, the realisation the cost of over indulgence and the six weeks between monthly salaries.

For romantics, February brings a day to celebrate and show their love, St. Valentine's Day. But, sharing love is not about gifts or a special meal but in the daily tenderness of touch, words, compassion, trust, etc.

Whether or not we have a special person in our lives we have One who loves us more than we can ever imagine and who desires our love too.

February 14th, this year is also Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. A time of taking stock of our discipleship, repenting and journeying through compassion and thankfulness in the 40 days of fasting and the intermingled Sundays of feasting.

Through the prophet Joel, God asked the people of Judah to not perform the symbolic act of rending their garments to show repentance and grief but actually experience what it portrays by tearing their hearts.

Joel 2:12-14 New King James Version (NKJV)

Call to Repentance

“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

Who knows *if* He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him — a grain offering and a drink offering or the LORD your God?

What does this mean for disciples today?

As disciples the Holy Spirit has convicted our spirit of our need of Jesus and we have received salvation by grace and know the promise of heaven, and it is from grace we receive faith and the fullness of God's promises. But unlike grace which is freely given faith needs the disciple to partake. Sometimes this can lead people to be content with grace and carry on living 'worldly lives' and miss out in this life. God wants to touch our soul ie our heart, emotions, mind, will, and personality with His Spirit and for that He needs our 'permission' or in other words realising the grace received and the unwillingness to walk in faith may we rend (open our hearts wide to God).

We all need encouragement and support to do this, so come along to the Circuit Ash Wednesday service and the Lent study groups.

May we know the wondrous love, joy, peace, comfort and strength of our Lord as we continue to walk with Him.

Every Blessing
Jenny