

“A Prayer of Letting Go”

- It has happened more times than I can tell you (and I should know better by now)
 - That I arrive home in the car, turn it off, and begin to gather all of my things in my arms to bring inside
 - Now I am a little particular when it comes to my car, I always have been, and I do not like to leave anything in my car
 - It's definitely a product of not having much of a commute!
 - When I get out of my car, everything comes in side: Trash, , computers, coats, phone, collar
 - So here I am, loaded up, arms full, and I'm approaching the door
 - And you can guess where this is going: I do not have a hand free to open the door.
 - I stare at it for a few moments before ultimately putting something down, letting go of it, so I can reach out for the door
 - It occurred to me this past week that, as I prepared for Lent, that maybe we could think of fasting in this way
 - Maybe it could be helpful to think of Lent in this way
- Now as unusual as it sounds, I have always enjoyed this season of Lent
 - There is something appealing in it for me that calls me back to the basics of our faith
 - It puts me and my life into perspective, hopefully into God's perspective
 - Do you ever wonder what God's perspective is like?
 - This week, it reminded me of marching band in junior high and high school
 - The metaphor is not limited to just us former band geeks, but to anyone who has ever worked in a group: dancers, singers, football
 - All of these groups work together to achieve a coordinated result
 - When practicing in band, the director would climb up to a stand where he could have a bird's eye view of what we looked like as a group
 - This way he could see us move as a group much like the people in the stands at the Friday night game

- From that view, he could see the crooked lines, the holes that were supposed to be closed in.
- The view from above was very different than our view on the field
- All we could see was maybe a person or two beside us, and the first row of people in the front.
- If we take this idea to its extreme, perhaps we can gain a glimpse into how God sees things
- From this viewpoint, I think one of the first things we would notice, and often what we tend to forget while on the field, is that our time here is limited.
- And here's the moment we've all been waiting for- the message that priests everywhere are telling their congregations right now:
- One day, you will die. I will die. We will die.
 - We just can't go through an Ash Wednesday without hearing that one.
- It becomes more real the more we think from God's perspective
- We have a short amount of time and we can waste much of it if we're not careful
- I imagine God dreaming, longing, for us, and for us to be all that God knows we can be.
- But also fully aware of all the ways we are not that.
- And while watching from this larger perspective, I think God has two options: God could either give up all together
- Give up on getting those marching lines straight, of ever getting us to care about each other, to be who we were created to be...
- Or God could start finding a way to reshape them, reshape us.
- The beauty of God's grace, the amazing thing about God's love, is that God did not give up.
- All is not lost- God is reshaping.
- And in the midst of our short life, we have the chance to align ourselves more fully with God's vision of who we can be
- And we have the hope that after our short life here, our eternal life is there.
- Fasting has for centuries or more been a way to help us get more into that perspective
 - To see the ourselves and the world from God's perspective
 - And I each year I have encouraged you to embrace that element of Lent

- Deny ourselves of something. Go without.
- The idea here is that in denying ourselves, in giving up something we really enjoy, or something that's bad for us but we want anyway
- Can break open our mindless routine and make a little space for the light of God to shine into our lives
- Bring mindfulness to our daily routine
- For instance, when you give up some type of food, then each time you want it, you can intentionally turn your heart to prayer instead
- It serves as a steady reminder
- We are reminded that our souls need divine nourishment just like our bodies need food.
- Each time you want that Starbucks you gave up, you can spend a little time inviting God into your life
- And lean on God for the spiritual boost as your body would enjoy the caffeine
- If you take on a devotional or a book, then as you give up the time to participate in that, you can use that extra time to connect with God
- Spend some of that time gained by the fast to do some deep self-analyzing
- When I fast, I typically approach it with an iron will
 - Do you know what I mean?
 - I come at it determined not to fail- if I'm not careful, it can even become a matter of pride, so I am careful
 - I don't take it lightly, and I don't like to fail
 - So I grab a hold of the fast... it becomes one more thing for me to hold onto
 - And I'm not saying that's completely wrong, but this year, I want to invite you, and ask of myself, to see it a little differently
 - I want to see fasting as letting go of something.
 - Of releasing it, rather than griping tightly on my promise
 - I hope that as I do this, and encounter Lent this year in a new way
 - That I will find my hands a little free-er to reach out to something more
 - That I will have a little more space in my life to embrace God's working my life and in this world
- You know, in its purest form, Ash Wednesday is incredibly simple
 - We put ashes on our head, not so others can see... Jesus warns us about that one.
 - But because they are in our future. These ashes mark us for death.

- One day, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, just as sure as we are born we will die
- We are hopefully given a new awareness of just how short, how precious, this life we have is
- We have so little time to in the great divine perspective to live, to love, and to be who God wants us to be
- And to be that in relationship to others in our lives
- So let go...
- Let go with a fast
- And let that fast move us to let go of many things that hold us down, keep us from God, and from neighbor
- Let go of hate, and embrace forgiveness and grace
- Let go of fear, and embrace the peace and love that is found in God
- Let go of the specific circumstances that can get us down, and reach out with open arms for a deeper meaning and joy
- May your Lent starting here with the stark reminder what is to come, of just how little time we really have.
- Also be a point in which you take this precious gift of a life God has given and live more fully into the person God needs you to be.

Amen.