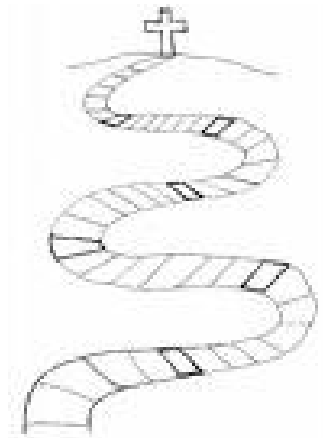


## *From the Pastor...*

Living out one's faith always has ironies and dilemmas.  
That's especially true for our disciplines and rituals.  
One of the fine lines that is drawn  
Is this:  
When is it about *us*?  
(Martin Luther had that battle,  
As a monk, and still continuing for a while as a priest.)  
And the truth is,  
That's actually what **the faith journey** is about  
**All** the time.  
The struggle of the heart  
Is to discern if we are **ever** or **never**  
At the center of the picture.  
In reality, that's the catch-22 of our humanity,  
Is it not?  
Human nature seems always to want to make it *about us*.  
(*Adam and Eve* had that battle,  
As residents of the Garden, and still continuing when expelled.)  
It would be the first thing listed  
If there was a disclosure printed on us somewhere  
Itemizing the ingredients of **sin!**

We are engaged these days in the disciplines of Lent.  
Jesus' journey to the Cross holds the ultimate clue.  
And this (or any) time of penitential devotion  
Is intended to show us the answer to that age old quandary.  
While we are the beneficiaries,  
It is **always** about Jesus and his struggles, his suffering, and his purposes.  
The call for us is to walk **with** him;  
To observe his struggles, his faithfulness, his commitment.  
But we sometimes prefer to make it about **our** effort.  
*What must I do to earn the reward* – and if not that –  
*At least some praise;*  
Hopefully from God – and if not that – at least from other people.

However, when we focus on Jesus' striving,  
*When we allow it to be about **him***, from temptations to crucifixion,  
Then we can focus on what that means for us and our salvation.  
Barbara Brown Taylor, talking about Lent, said,  
"I was at least twenty-five years old before I learned  
That Lent wasn't about punishing myself for being human –  
And it took me another five years to figure out  
That it wasn't about giving up Hershey's...."  
How true! Lenten discipline, faithful devotion,  
Living out one's faith...  
These are always about Jesus' sacrifice and God's grace  
And our learning how profoundly they change me (us).  
And that ultimately means learning  
That any *saintly* behavior for which I (we) strive  
Is not about changing God and his attitudes toward me (us).  
Now that doesn't mean that we can't see him more vividly  
And understand him more fully  
When we've put aside some of the distractions.  
It just means that only when it's **all** about **him**  
That it can ever even begin to be about us.  
And, you know what? Irony of ironies,  
Then, quite apart from our own doing,  
The Gospel ("good news") is that it is, **not about,**  
But **for us!**



Peace for the ever continuing journey - Lent and beyond.

*Pastor E*