

# The Lenten Sacrifice

- Name literally means “spring season”
- 40 day period of sacrifice, often including fasting, the giving up of a vice or luxury, and donating time and/or money to others
- Based on Christ’s fasting in the wilderness for 40 days
- Begins on Ash Wednesday (mourning), ends on Easter Sunday

# The Lenten Sacrifice

- Observed by the Catholic church since the Council of Nicea (325 AD); continues to be observed by Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc
- Today is Palm Sunday, the final week of Lent.
- Three pillars of Lent: “renewed vigor”
  - Prayer (justice towards God)
  - Fasting (justice towards self)
  - Almsgiving (justice towards neighbors)
  - Self-reflection, simplicity, honesty are also emphasized

# Lent and the Bible

- Three main problems:
  - It is mandatory, required:
    - St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) -  
*"Our fast at any other time is voluntary; but during Lent, we sin if we do not fast."*
    - Council of Laodicea (364 AD) – commanded that Lent be observed saying it was “*of strict necessity*”.

# Lent and the Bible

- Three main problems:
  - How can we command what God has not commanded? **Mark 7:1-9**
    - Cassianus (360-435 AD) contrasting the New Testament Church with the (Catholic) church of his day- *“It ought to be known...that the observance of the forty days had no existence, so long as the perfection of that primitive Church remained inviolate.”*

# Lent and the Bible

- Three main problems:
  - It is used to make a person holy:
    - Catholic Encyclopedia, “*the real aim of Lent is, above all else, to prepare men for the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ...the better the preparation the more effective the celebration will be. One can effectively relive the mystery only with purified mind and heart. The purpose of Lent is to provide that purification by weaning men from sin and selfishness through self-denial and prayer, by creating in them the desire to do God's will and to make His kingdom come by making it come first of all in their hearts.*

# Lent and the Bible

- Three main problems:
  - Its purpose is problematic: God has addressed it
    - *“to prepare men for the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ”* – I Cor. 11:23-29
    - *“The purpose of Lent is to provide that purification”* – Heb. 9:13-14, I Pet. 1:22
    - *“weaning men from sin and selfishness through self-denial and prayer”* – I Pet. 4:1-3, Col. 2:18-22
    - *“creating in them the desire to do God’s will”* – Col. 2:23, 1:9; Eph. 1:9, 5:19
    - *“to make His kingdom come by making it come first of all in their hearts.”* II Thess. 1:3-5, II Pet. 1:3-11

# Lent and the Bible

- Three main problems:
  - The emphasized characteristics are addressed by God:
    - Prayer (always) – Eph. 6:18, Lk. 18:1
    - Fasting (voluntary) – Matt. 9:14-15
    - Almsgiving (Gr. “mercy, pity”) – Lk. 10:36-37, Jas. 2:8, Gal. 5:14
    - Self-reflection, simplicity, honesty – I Cor. 11:28, II Cor. 13:5
  - The inference many make is that it is acceptable to have “vices”, etc. the rest of the year...