

March 22, 2020 – Lent 4 (A)

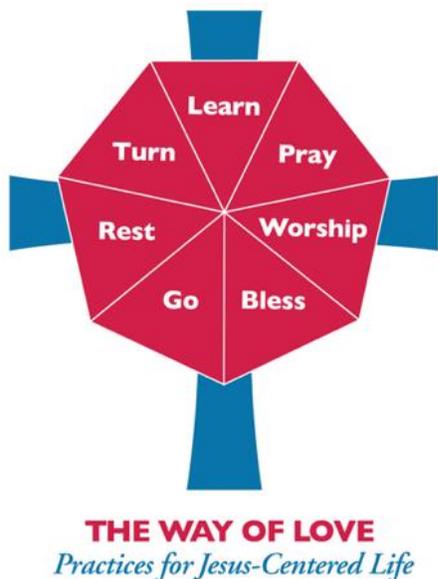
Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent - Bless

Drawing on the ancient practice of setting aside Lent as a period of study and preparation for living as a Christian disciple, we are pleased to present weekly teachings from *Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent*. Learn more at episcopalchurch.org/life-transformed.

READ Ezekiel 36:24-28

In the passage from Ezekiel, we see that God *blesses* the Israelites through the act of sprinkling them with clean water. This reading reminds us that we, too, are blessed by God through the waters of baptism. Some congregations practice asperging (the sprinkling of holy water on the people) in the Easter Vigil after the renewal of baptismal promises.

As noted, a major element in the ancient rite was turning from sin and renouncing the things that draw us from the love of God. We are called to renounce the idols we worship in place of God. Now, from our modern viewpoint, we might not think we worship idols; however, idols are not simply images of other gods. Rather, an idol is anything to which we assign ultimate value in our lives – those things we spend our time, talent, and treasure serving other than God. Our job, power, money, reputation, certain relationships, or anything that pulls on our heart more than God – these are idols.



While idols seem momentarily satisfying, they eventually harm our relationship with God and limit our capacity or willingness to live for others. Often, we cling to idols out of an attitude of scarcity; we desire what we think we do not have. When our hearts are focused on an idol, they are bound up and clenched shut like a heart of stone. Only when we turn to God will our hearts be opened so that we can, in turn, open our hearts in blessing to others. When we realize that there is enough of God's love for us, we no longer cling to the idols of old that can never give us that sense of abundance. Once we are secure in that abundance, we will leap to bless others with our stories, our money, our time, and our hearts.

REFLECT: *Blessing* is necessarily relational, an affirmation of our belovedness as fellow children of God. Take a few minutes to consider what you have spent the most time, money, or worry on in the last week. What amount of attention or time do they take relative to resources spent in direct relationship with God? Did these things keep you from blessing others? Or are they a blessing?