

WEEKLY SERMON

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The Trials of Lent

Many years ago, I had a student holiday job working in the huge clinical research department of Astra Zeneca.

The scientists were running final research trials to get approval of a new drug that they all knew worked wonders, but the trials had to be completed properly before the drug could receive final approval and be used to save lives.

Thousands of people had willingly agreed to participate in the trials and had agreed to the discipline of having every aspect of their health recorded and measured over the period of the trial.

Patients participating in the trial were given questions such as “How much energy do you have today” and they had to put a mark on a line. My job was to measure the mark and enter the data into the system.

It was the day I fell in love with elderly people.

I was measuring up the answer booklet for an 89-year-old lady who was participating in the trial. Next to the trial question ‘How is your sex drive today?’ in spindly, beautiful, copperplate handwriting she had written, ‘Chance would be a fine thing’.

So often in life we ask the wrong questions. Focus on the wrong thing. Miss the bigger picture of what is important, not just in this life, but in the eternal life of God.

For us, Lent is time to refocus, to reconnect, to realise the bigger picture that we are living in. To recognise where we have gone wrong and asked the wrong questions.

In Lent we try afresh to have clinical self-control and discipline to keep our eyes on the source of our hope and joy. To see ourselves as hopeful participants in trials and temptations.

The trials of Lent are not something to be skipped, we are willing participants, allowing every aspect of our lives to be measured and changed by God. Jesus tells us in Mark chapter 1, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.”

The trials of Lent are our joyful proper preparation to participate in the good news. Chance is indeed a fine thing, but we don’t rely on it. The Kingdom of God has come near and our salvation is in Christ.

Amen.

Rev Nancy Goodrich
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