

**Wednesday, March 6, 2024 // Written by The Rev. Ben Robertson**

Lent can feel like a long season. Lent does not contain the anticipation of Advent or the festivity of Christmas or the long, warm, sabbath days of the season after Pentecost. Lent, on the other hand, feels like a long wait until the power of the Passion and the exuberance of Easter.

And yet, Lent is a lot more than a mere "wait." We are not collectively sitting in some spiritual office until we are called. Rather, many of us engage with the season with discipline: giving up something or taking on something new in an effort to better connect with God. But by now, perhaps we have stumbled. We've missed a day or two or temptation got the best of us. And that is ... perfectly ok. You are not perfect. You are not a bad person or a failure. You are still a beloved child of God.

When I struggle with a discipline, I remember the words of St. Benedict, "it is for us to train our hearts to live in grace, to sacrifice our self-centered desires, to find the peace without want, without seeking it for ourselves; and even when we fail, always we begin again." Not if, but "when we fail." I am also reminded of the prayers during a wedding, "Give them grace, when they hurt each other." Not if, but when.

Sacrifice and discipline are good, in Lent and at all times, but failure is understood and forgiven. And there is merit and growth in forgiving ourselves (we are often the hardest person to forgive!) and beginning again. Lent is not a sprint but a marathon, and if our method from growing closer to God is still working, then let's keep trying.

For the ultimate goal of Lent is not drudgery, but forgiveness, ultimately exemplified by the resurrection of Christ. So keep the faith, dust yourself off, and begin again.

Keep the Faith,

Ben+