

LENT 1 2010

*SO WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY?*

One of the gifts and blessings of being a Pastor, is to spend the most challenging and special moments in life with the people of God. Baptisms and Weddings; illnesses and funerals. Struggles to just get by; and celebrations for moments of joy. To be invited into people's lives at these times is an honor and a privilege. And it creates some very, very special bonds. It is a gift and a blessing.

When people have been through a difficult time, it is often a life changing moment. They discover anew the presence, the grace of God. It's a time for growth and new beginnings. But not always, not for all people. For some, for too many, when life gets better, God gets put back on a shelf.

Back away we had some folks who'd been through a horrible time and the Pastors were there with them, every step of the way. Later as life returned to some normalcy, they began to drift, we didn't see them at worship. And when I called, they told me very plainly, "My life is getting better, I don't need all that church 'stuff' now." Yeah for honesty. But how sad. For the closeness of God to be dependent on the momentary crisis. For faith to basically be a question to God of "What have you done for me lately?"

Next weekend we are taking our confirmands away to talk about this very presence of God. The reminder that God is with us in all things.

The point of our lessons today.

Our first reading from Deuteronomy reminds the people of God, that God gave them their land and that life should involve regular offerings of thanksgiving. When the Egyptians oppressed them, it was God who delivered them, and so again, life should be a thanksgiving.

Our Psalm reminds us that God covers us and bears us up.

Our second lesson from Romans tells us that God delivers all who call on his name. Everyone...what a gift of grace.

And our Gospel is the traditional story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness with the ever present reminder, that he is able to get through it, because God is always with him.

These are great reminders on this first Sunday in Lent. As we shared on Ash Wednesday, Lent isn't meant to be a burden, but rather a gift. A gift that reminds us of God's presence in our lives every step of the way. Daily, we are blessed. Daily, we are touched by God's grace. Daily, we face our joys and our sorrows, knowing that we have the hope and promise of the Resurrection.

What have you done for me lately? Oh. Thank you.