

*Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.
Proverbs 15:16*

The season of Lent is a battleground. The Gospel reading for the First Sunday in Lent is our Lord Jesus being lead by the Spirit into the wilderness to battle the devil's temptations. Spoiler alert: Jesus stands fast and wins.

We are tempted in battle, too. Unlike Jesus, sometimes we fall. It's then that we rush to Jesus and cling to His perfect life and forgiveness. He stands us back up and sticks us back in the battle promising to be our strength through the whole thing. In Lent, we don't pretend that we're not battling against the devil, the world, and our sinful nature and seek to put on the whole armor of God. But like a general who sees where the enemy is attacking the hardest and sends more troops there, we should take notice of the spots in our lives where battle is being waged and perhaps we haven't bolstered our defenses as we should. Lent calls us to this because it calls us to reflect where I've left my defenses down and allowed the enemy to gain ground. It's a call to repentance (to turn from the sins where I've allowed the enemy to gain ground) and to be strengthened by the mercy and life of Jesus laid down for me.

Sometimes people give something up for Lent. That's good. There's probably many things we should give up not only for Lent. But the purpose of giving something up is not for its own sake but it is to bolster the defenses against the enemy and gain strength. So for example, if a husband recognizes that he has been neglecting his wife and children because he has given most of his attention to the TV or other screens when he's home, then giving that thing up can move him away from neglect of attention toward an engaging attentiveness to his family - strengthening the home. It can be this way for many things. Each of us must reflect (or "examine ourselves" as St. Paul says) where we may have given ground and pray for the Lord to grant strength to gain it back. He will not fail you.

Giving things up puts me into the practice of realizing that my desires don't rule me, my stuff doesn't rule me, Jesus does and He has a life of blessing to give me. In Lent, we have put before us again that Jesus calls us to pray, fast, and give (Matthew 6) which help guide us to where we should strengthen ourselves and know that our victory has been won in the Lord Christ who has crushed the devil under His feet. All of our practices have that aim - a life of repentance and faith in Christ because He is our battle tested champion whom we seek to serve and confess.

In Christ,
Pastor Suggitt