

Luke's Gospel

First Parish Church
Manchester By The Sea
March 9, 2023 – Session One

Meeting at 4:00 p.m. Thursdays on Zoom

**Straight Talk for Real People,
Then ... and NOW!**

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

Opening Prayer

From the cowardice that dares not face new truth, from the laziness that is contented with half-truth, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, ... good Lord, deliver us. If there is any phoniness in our professed loyalty to you, if there is prejudice underneath a thin veneer of tolerance, if we wear a mask of counterfeit love that hides a heart of intolerance, ... expose us ... for what we are that at least we may be honest before your presence. Amen.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

Group Introductions ...

- Name and where you live.
- What is your earliest memory of the church or the Bible?
- What one thing about the Bible scares you?

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

What does Lent mean to you?

- Lent is the forty days before Easter not counting Sundays.
- Lent excludes Sundays because according to tradition every Sunday is like a little Easter.
- Mardi Gras is the day before Lent begins, which begins with Ash Wednesday.
- This year it's from February 22 (Ash Wednesday) to April 9 (Easter).

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

- Read Luke 3:15-22
- At Jesus' baptism the sky split open, the Spirit of God, which looked like a dove, descended and landed on Jesus, and a voice from heaven said,
- "This is my Son, My Beloved, with whom I am pleased."
- Afterward Jesus was sent into the wilderness by the Spirit where he fasted and prayed for 40 days.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

- Maybe Jesus needed some time with God to sort through the major changes happening in his life.
- Maybe he needed to get away from family, friends and the familiar routine in order to experience God (and himself) more clearly.
- Like Jesus, we may need to take some serious time to pray and listen for God.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NO!!!

What do people do during Lent?

- Are you searching for something more?
- Tired of running in circles, but not really living life with direction, purpose or passion?
- We try to fill the emptiness inside us with mindless TV, worthless chatter, stimulants, alcohol, too many activities or other irrelevant stuff.
- We run away from life and from God.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NO!!!



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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NO!!!

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NO!!!

Or to use Lenten study theme ... “Straight Talk for Real People.”

- Lent is a great time to return to God and re-focus our lives to be more in line with Jesus.
- It's a 40-day practice session in changing our lifestyle and letting God change our hearts.
- Lent is often said to be a time of special SACRIFICE ... fasting, special devotions, prayer, service, or even unmasking.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NO!!!

- What comes to mind about the Season of Lent from your past?
- What have you heard about “what you do during Lent?”
- What do you think about when you hear that theme “*Straight talk ...leading to renewal*”?
- What is the biggest challenge for us this year when we come to Lent?

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NO!!!

Our theme says a lot!

- “Straight talk” means being honest with ourselves, who we are, what we are, how we live our Christian life, how we are a follower of Jesus.
- “Straight talk” means looking at society ... seeing where people are hurting, where people are excluded and put-down, and where there is enduring pain as people attempt to live their lives.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

Let's go to John 13:12-30 ... the Betrayal by Judas.

- Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Son of God with a kiss, has become the most despised person in the annals of human history.
- His personality is portrayed as the darkest in the chronicles of the world.
- The name Judas bears a stigma, reflecting the scorn for him that burns within us.
- Where do we find Judas in our lives?

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

- Maybe it is in our home and where we hold fast in an argument because we know we
 - put the ice cream back in the refrigerator
 - put the car keys on the table in plain sight!
 - did not lay that wet bathing suit on the antique chair on the landing.
- Being absolutely sure I am right, being absolutely convinced and all knowing that a particular action by another is wrong, ... is not a good way to live life.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

- Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Son of God was the treasurer of the disciples (John 12 & 13).
- Judas was in a prominent place at times, ... sitting next to Jesus at the Last Supper.
- We know what he did, but why did he do it?
- There may have been several motives.
- Maybe fear, maybe the money, maybe emotional certainty of what must happen!

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

- The New Testament writers, who come 50 to 100 years later, disdain Judas and in every list of the disciples, Judas is listed last, with a note of contempt.
- We see clearly the evil of Judas contrasted with the absolute purity of Jesus Christ.
- What does the Judas story tell us about the life in those days?
- What does this story tell us about life in our days?

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

- One theory is that Judas had become convinced that Israel needed that powerful leader that had been promised and if Jesus would only become more aggressive.
- This idea suggests that Judas was driven by what he thought was right ... literally he thought he was doing the will of God!
- *Straight talk ... Leading to Renewal!*

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

**Or to use our Lenten theme ...
"Straight talk ... for Real People."**

- What do these two stories tell us about straight talk ... and God's role in renewal?
- Talking straight is difficult and it involves exposure of who we are and what we are becoming.
- The fear of exposure keeps us from being authentic ... genuine ... faithful.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NO!!!

Lent is a special time for us to be in touch with who we are and what God intends for us to be and do .

- What does all this say to you?
- Where is the growing edge for your life today?
- What might you be doing over these weeks of Lent to live out that authentic life in Christ?

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NO!!!

Homework:

- Read the following in Luke:
 - Luke 5 ... early controversies
 - Luke 5:17 – 6:11
 - Luke 10:25-42
- I will be sending you a copy of this homework ... and a pdf version of today's presentation.

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Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NO!!!

Closing Prayer

Holy Lord God, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a sign of service and compassion. Show us how to live and love in service and with compassion, for the sake of all your children. Let us go from this place to work in company with all God's children to do God's work and God's will on Earth as it is in heaven, that in loving and serving one another the kingdom of God may come to this world through you. Amen.

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