



Pastor's Page



A Passion for Pancakes

Last Tuesday lunchtime I went to a *Connected* prayer meeting at the home of a local church leader. The reward for those who arrived early was a pancake or two! I knew this was the deal so made sure I arrived in good time! In the evening I went to visit a family in Wolverhampton and was also offered pancakes there. I resisted the urge to abstain and had three! The next day I went to the Co-op and bought 16 ready-made pancakes just to tide me over! (They were really for the Lenten group but I had one or two myself!)

Yes, since childhood I have always loved Pancakes (which we only ever had on Shrove Tuesday) but as a boy I never really understood the reason for this time-honoured tradition. I loved the feast without the fast. "Giving something up for Lent" to me was just a light-hearted comment often linked with diet. A good friend of mine told me that on his first visit to Sunday school the teacher went round the class asking them what they were giving up for Lent. When it came to his turn he said; "*Sunday School!*" and promptly left! (*He became a strong Christian later in life*)

Lent, which is an old English word for spring, originated in the fourth century of the church. The season of Lent spans 40 weekdays (not counting Sundays) beginning on Ash Wednesday and climaxing during Holy Week with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and concluding Saturday before Easter. Originally, Lent was the time of preparation including concentrated study and prayer for those who were to be baptized on Easter morning. On the understanding that these new members were to be received into a Faith community the entire church was called to preparation. The season of Lent has not been well observed in much of evangelical Christianity, largely because it was associated with "high church" liturgical worship that some churches were eager to reject. However, we may have thrown out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. This whole idea of giving something up for lent comes from the life of Jesus himself. Following his baptism in the Jordan river he was led out into the Judean desert where for 6 weeks he was tempted by the devil. During this time he ate nothing, and was extremely hungry. **(Luke 4:1-13)** The temptation was real, ruthless and relentless but Jesus resisted and won this bruising encounter as he would win the ultimate victory on the cross at Calvary. Here, Jesus finally and eternally defeated Satan as proved by his glorious resurrection.

Jesus did all this for us and we certainly don't have to do anything to win his favour. However, fasting or going without something for 6 weeks can be a good spiritual discipline and a way of checking out what our priorities really are in life. It's one thing to say "I can live without the television" its quite another thing to switch it off for 6 weeks!

To help us reflect on all this we are running a Lenten course called "Meekness and Majesty?" meeting each Wednesday at church during Lent. Why not come along? We are also going out into the local vicinity for 4 Sundays in March offering DVDs of the Life of Jesus to people. (There will be meeting about this at 3.00pm today) Can you join us?

You see Lent is not about a passion for Pancakes its about a passion for Christ.

25th February 2007