

## Reflections for Lent – Week 2

### Isaiah 58: 1-9

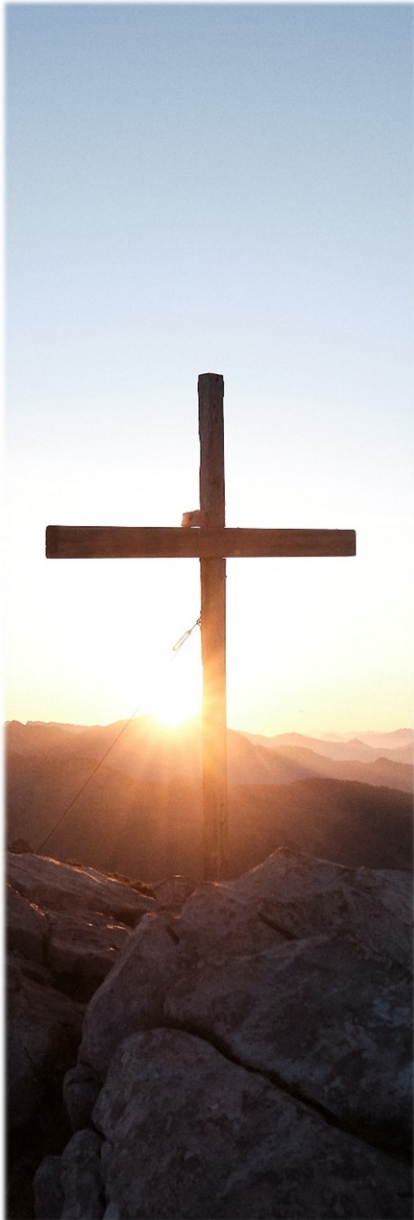


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#### Before you begin your reflection:

- Take a few slow deep breaths to help quieten your mind and leave the business of today to one side.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to help refresh and deepen your understanding of Scripture.

#### Read the passage (Isaiah 58: 1-9):

Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. “Why have we fasted,” they say, “and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?” “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

‘Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I.

#### Thoughts:

My biggest issue with Lent is the way fasting has been trivialised. “I’m giving up chocolate or coffee” hardly seems to get us to a place of sympathising with Jesus’ suffering: for that is the point of Lent, to appreciate the suffering of Christ, both in the wilderness and upon the Cross. This passage in Isaiah invites us to undertake a different kind of fast: where we intentionally live lights for Jesus amongst the darkness of our world; where we commit to following and living His way, showing and sharing His love in word and action.

#### Some questions to consider:

1. What was/is your impression of fasting? How has this been challenged/changed/affirmed by this reading from Isaiah?
2. What kind of fasting has God chosen? How does Isaiah express this? How might you express this, in your own words?
3. How is God calling you to live as light in the world, following His way, today? This week? This month? This year?

#### Prayer:

LORD God, help me to fast in the way You have chosen. Show me how to live Your way, showing and sharing Your love in my words and my actions. Grant me Your Spirit’s help, acting as my wisdom and my guide. Strengthen and deepen my faith in Jesus, through whom I receive salvation and the promise of New Life. May the light of Christ shine through my today, tomorrow, and always. Amen.

