

LENT - WEEDS

March 6, 2022



What is Lent?

Lent is the 40 days before Easter. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which was March 2 this year. Lent ends on the Saturday before Easter - April 16. Count the days between March 2 and April 16. Do you see the problem? How many days did you count? So, why is Lent 40 days?

(see the answer on the last page)

40 is an important number in the Bible. Can you think of stories in the Bible in which 40 is important? Here are some hints:

- How many days and nights did it rain to bring on the flood that Noah rode out on the ark? (Genesis 7:14)
- How long did the Israelites wander in the wilderness? (Deuteronomy 8:2)
- How many days did Jesus fast in the desert before he was tempted? (Matthew 4:1-2)

What do you think it was like for Noah's family to watch it rain for 40 days and 40 nights?
How would it have been for Jesus to be tempted in the desert after he had gone without food for 40 days?
How about the Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years?

What do you think 40 years represents? An easy time? A hard time? A challenging time?

What happens when we go through challenging times?

After leaving Egypt, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. They were sometimes hungry and sometimes thirsty. They made good decisions and bad ones, but all along, God was with them. God gave them food to eat. Do you remember what they ate? If not, look it up (Exodus 16:2-4, 31). God gave them water to drink. Do you remember how? If not, read about it here (Exodus 17:1-5). They wandered and they learned and they became a community of people who trusted and loved God. They were changed in those 40 years. It was a challenging time but it was also a time of change, growth, and learning to see, trust, know, and love God.

So, Lent is 40 days. Based on what we know about the stories of people going through 40 day or 40 year experiences, what do you think is supposed to happen to us during Lent?

(The answer is not that we are to wander in the wilderness, go through a flood, or be tempted in the desert – in case you were wondering.)



Pollinator Garden

This Lent, we are going to continue preparing and planting the pollinator garden. We are going to allow the garden to help us prepare for Easter, which is the day and season (Easter is both a day – this year it is April 17th and a season that lasts 7 weeks) that we celebrate life and new life.



So far, we have cut back the shrubs and trees, dug up the stumps, weeded, added compost, and placed a beautiful pollinator garden sign. Good work you all! Soon we will add a path, mulch, and plant.

WEEDS

One of the activities we will engage most often in the garden is pulling weeds. We will be pulling weeds for years and as long as the pollinator garden exists. There will almost always be at least one weed that needs to be pulled – trust me!

What are weeds? The definition is this: a wild plant growing where it is not wanted and in competition with cultivated plants.

So, are weeds “bad”? Can you think of some places we allow weeds to grow?

My yard is mostly weeds. We do not care about nor want a yard full of grass. We like the native weeds. Many of our weeds are wild violets and grow tiny purple flowers in the spring. They are so pretty! The great thing about weeds is they do not need much care. They grow with wild abandon. A yard full of weeds is also better for the environment than grass. Do you know why?

(find the answer on back page)

So weeds are not inherently bad. In fact, they are often native and helpful. Sometimes however, they are invasive species or non-native plants that are harmful to the local environment and cause a lot of problems.

In this study, weeds are any plant we do not want in the pollinator garden.

What is the problem with letting a lot of weeds grow in the garden?

What will happen if we do not pull them?

What will happen to the plants we plant for the monarchs?



Bible Study - The Parable of the Sower

Read Matthew 13:1-9

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear."



A parable is a story using things and experiences the people listening would understand to help explain something else. Why would the parable of the sower have been something those listening could relate to?

- In the Scripture text, which seeds did well? Why?
- Which seeds appeared to do well at first but then died? Why?
- What happened to the seeds that fell among thorns (which are a form of weeds)?
- This parable is not really about seeds. What do you think it is about?
- What do you think the seed represent?
- What does the good soil represent?

Distractions

As we said earlier, weeds are not necessarily bad. They are just growing in a place that might hurt the plants we are trying to grow and therefore, we have to remove them. For example, a gardener would not want weeds to choke out the lettuce she was growing by blocking light or taking too much soil and water. We must make sure weeds do not crowd out the milkweed we want to grow in the pollinator garden. Weeds are plants that are not helpful in the garden you are growing. Weeds are like a distraction. They distract and take away from what you are trying to do or grow.

All of us have distractions or things that take us away from what we should or want to be doing.

What distracts you from doing homework?

What distracts you from finishing your chores?

What distracts you from paying attention to the person speaking?



Elliott & Emma

Distractions are not necessarily bad. My cats can be a huge distraction in my life (we have five and three of them are kittens) but I would never get rid of these crazy cute fuzzy distractions. What is important is that I know they can be a distraction so I prepare myself when I really need to focus. Sometimes I put them in their fancy cat crates or in another room so I can work and tend to my daughter or work without distraction.

Sometimes during Lent, people give up something so they can focus more on God. They might give up watching TV so they can spend time reading and praying. Other people add something to their lives, like helping others or reading the Bible every day. This is because people are trying to make more room for God. They are trying to pay attention to God. They are hoping to be changed and to focus more on God and less on all the things that distract them.

What distracts you from God? From your faith? From church?

Lenten Spiritual Practices

During Lent, I will offer ideas for spiritual practices, which are actions we take to help us tend to our faith. They help us pay attention to God and to our own thoughts and feelings. We often lead very busy lives full of distractions. Spiritual practices are meant to help you clear away some of the distractions at least for a short time so that you can pay attention and focus.

Pull Weeds & Journal

Moving our bodies and physical labor can be a good spiritual practice, especially when our task is something we must repeat over and over—the more monotonous the better. What does monotonous mean? When we get into a rhythm of doing one task over and over, we often find we are able to pay attention to our bodies, focus on the task, and clear away some of the chatter or busy thoughts in our heads.

This week, I invite you to weed as part of your spiritual practice. You can weed the pollinator garden. You can weed the flower beds at your house. You can weed a neighbor's flower bed. You might even ask an elderly person you know if you can weed around their house. Weeding is not an easy task as you get older because it can hurt to bend over for a long time and get down on your knees.

When you are weeding, pay attention to how you are feeling.

Is it calming? Frustrating?

Are you having fun talking to family members? Or did you weed alone?

Are you worried about other things or are you focused just on the task of pulling weeds?

Did your body get into a soothing rhythm?

After you weed, I invite you to write or draw about your experience weeding. Then write or draw about that which distracts you from doing what you want or should do. How might you pay better attention and move or remove the distractions. As with my illustration about my cats, I am not going to remove them but I can move them into another space when I need to focus. How can you help yourself focus on what is really important to you?

Image by Julie Johnson



Answers

Page 1: Lent is 40 days and yet if you count the days between March 2 and April 16, you will count 46 days. To figure out what went wrong, try counting again, but leave out the Sundays. Now, you will count the 40 days of Lent. Sundays are not counted in the season of Lent. This is because each Sunday is considered a little Easter. Every Sunday we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the new life that is offered in the love of God. Every Sunday is a celebration. Lent is a time of preparation for the resurrection so Sundays are excluded because each Sunday we are not preparing for the resurrection but already celebrating it.

Page 2: Why are weeds better for your yard than grass?

There are many reasons it is good to allow weeds to grow in your yard. First, growing grass requires a lot of work and often chemicals that are harmful to the environment and insects, including pollinators. Second, fields and open spaces in nature are not covered in one kind of plant. When we plant grass in our yards or open fields we are creating a monoculture – or an ecosystem with too little diversity. Native weeds provide greater diversity and are also good for pollinators. I have all kinds of insects and pollinators that visit our yard full of weeds—not just the pollinator garden I planted for them. To find out more about why a yard full of happy weeds is good for the environment, you can read these articles:

<https://www.onegreenplanet.org/lifestyle/weedy-lawns-better-fancy-grass/>

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/brainwaves/outgrowing-the-traditional-grass-lawn/>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/lawn-care/lgen/your-weedy-lawns-is-a-good-thing.htm>

Resources:

The image of the caterpillar on the milkweed leaf on page 1 is taken from Monarch Butterfly Garden and can be found here: <https://monarchbutterflygarden.net/milkweed-plant-seed-resources/asclepias-purpurascens-purple-milkweed/>

The image of the butterfly on page 4 is a photograph by Julie Johnston. You can find her beautiful work at <https://juliejohnstonphotography.com/flowers/>

The image of the monarch on milkweed to the right is from the Monarch Butterfly Garden website.

