

Week 1 of Lent / the Great Lent

1. Gathering & Prayer

- Introductions to one another and any expressions of hope for your journey through Lent.
- Opening Prayer, giving thanks for our insights and asking that our hearts may remain open to returning more fully to God.

Father, you have given us new life in your Son Jesus Christ and poured out your Spirit upon us. Renew us by the same Spirit and transform us into your image of Christ, that by the power of his love within us, others may come to know him as Saviour and follow him as Lord. Amen.

2. Coptic Orthodox Gospel

Theme: The Treasures Sunday

Gospel: Matthew 6:19-33 Key verses 19, 33

**DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH...
BUT STRIVE FIRST FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU AS WELL.**

Reflection:

Jesus' teaching on laying up treasure in heaven follows his teaching on the attitude and motivation for almsgiving.

- What is your greatest treasure?
- What priorities are expressed in the way that you use your treasure?
- What is your motivation for giving to God?
- Is this gospel reading only concerned with financial treasures?



Reflections on the Coptic Orthodox Gospel from a Protestant perspective

“All is vanity.” We read this sentence five times in the book of Ecclesiastes as Qoheleth the teacher or preacher reflects on life.

As we reflect on our lives, what is really important? Listen to people around you. What do they talk about? Is it financial matters? Is it a career achievement? Is it some new acquisition? Is it the success of sporting teams? As you listen, you come to understand what is important to them. How would our conversation change if Jesus were physically present?

Jesus was actually quite clear about life priorities. It was not earthly wealth, but heavenly treasure. It was not the dark, unhealthy stimuli of the earthly world, but the light, healthy stimuli of his world. It was not even a life of vacillation between this world and his, but an absolute focus on his, a whole hearted devotion to him and his kingdom.

What does your life say about your priorities? Is it summed up in Bernie Taupin’s lyrics to the Elton John song “Candle in the wind”?

*And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never knowing who to cling to
When the rain set in.*

Or does your life reflect the conclusion of Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.*”

Jesus gave us clear direction about life priorities in his Gethsemane prayer, “Not my will but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

3. Closing Prayer

In silence, choose one feature from the time together and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something that God thinks is particularly important. This may involve a feeling of encouragement or discouragement. It may be a word or gesture that has significance for you. Or it may be something that is emerging that seemed at the time rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart whether of intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Some people may choose to share a word, or an insight, or a prayer: others may prefer to remain silent.

Together: In all we are and in all we do, let us give glory to the Father, Son and Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

You may wish to offer one another a sign of peace as this time draws to a close.