



Daily Faith Practices

Fifth Sunday in Lent (A) – Romans 8:6-11

Focus: *Set your mind on Christ*

word of life

“To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6 NRSV)

Read Romans 8:6-11

Focus! Set your mind on the Spirit! That is precisely what Lent invites us to do—to refocus our attention and priority on Christ. But let’s get practical. It is already the Fifth Sunday in Lent. Some of our best intentions have already been shattered. That’s why Paul’s simple words in this lectionary text serve as a sobering wake-up call. “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6 NRSV) Without the Spirit uniting us to Christ, our relationship with God is hostile and estranged.

1. *What are ways to avoid setting our mind on the flesh?*
2. *What does it mean to set your mind on the Spirit?*
3. *How does Lent help you to set your mind on the Spirit?*

It can be confusing to still have a physical body with flesh, but to be told that we are not in the flesh. There is no doubt while on this earth we will always be of flesh. That is our reality. But, the powers of this world, including death itself, do not have the final authority over our lives.

4. *Reflect on what it means to be a body with flesh, but not “in the flesh”.*
5. *What are examples of when we act “in the flesh” as opposed to “in the Spirit”?*

The Apostle Paul pleads in his letter to the Romans, “But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.” (Romans 8:9 NRSV) Paul is not describing a relationship in the future, but one that already been established through Christ. The Spirit of God already dwells within us, continually pointing us to the cross of Christ.

Life and peace are gifts given so we no longer need to experience a hostile relationship with God and others. Being in Christ and with the Spirit opens up new possibilities of how we live out our faith on a daily basis.

As we consider what it means to live in Christ, we cannot do so without the Spirit of God. To be in the Spirit is to be in Christ. As humans, we need to be reminded on a daily basis of this already-established relationship. Too often, we choose to set our minds, hearts, and energy on those things not of God.

6. *When do you see evidence in your own life of the Spirit of God dwelling with you?*
7. *Reflect on the connection between Christ and the Spirit in your own personal life.*

But Paul’s focus is not entirely on this world. He writes, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11 NRSV) We are given a glimpse of the Easter promise: just as we have been united with Christ in death, so we shall also be united with him in resurrection. Our bodies of flesh and bones are temporary homes, not to be mistaken for eternal resting places. We are truly sanctuaries for the indwelling of God and God’s own Spirit.

8. *How might you care for your body, knowing it is a home for the Spirit?*
9. *What is the Easter promise?*

Word among us

Tension in the marriage was growing and conversation was sparse. The apartment had seemed increasingly small and stuffy, so the couple decided to get in the car and drive to a café for coffee. They decided to try a new café across town, so they put the café's address into their GPS mapping system. The directions spoken through the GPS were a welcome interruption to the silence in the car.

After driving for about fifteen minutes to a new part of town, they became concerned and a bit suspicious as they drove through a rough-looking neighborhood. They made a quick decision to turn around. But with each turn, they heard the GPS voice, "Recalculating..."

1. *What does it mean when the GPS mapping system says, "Recalculating"?*
2. *Share a similar story of getting lost and being told the system was recalculating.*

Due to construction, the couple had to make some quick turns. With every turn, the GPS announced, "Recalculating." Finally they turned off the GPS. At the same time, they laughed and looked at each other. They got the message through GPS. It was time to recalculate their relationship. They decided to go to a counselor and get back on track to a healthy marriage.

In some ways, Lent is a season to recalculate and re-direct our focus. We confess the times we have set our mind on the flesh and earthly things. We pray for God to make room in our hearts and our lives for the Spirit to dwell. Paul writes, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." (Romans 8:9b NRSV)

3. *How might we recalculate the direction of our lives to make room for the Spirit of Christ to dwell?*
4. *How might you use the remaining days of Lent to re-direct your attention to Christ?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

High-level athletes spend significant energy keeping their bodies in top condition, but also spend time preparing their minds. They know how important it is to set their minds on positive images. If athletes set their minds on failure and loss, they often face defeat. But as they hone their skills and focus on best practices, often their performances rise to the occasion.

Paul encourages us to set our minds on the Spirit. For we have already been given the gift of the Spirit in our baptism. "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." (Romans 8:9b NRSV) We do not set our minds on the Spirit in order to get something, but to be an even more open and recipient of God's grace. We set our minds on the Spirit, live in Christ, and encourage others to do likewise.

5. *What do you plan to do this week to set your mind on the Spirit of Christ?*

Prayer

Mighty God, set our minds on Christ and free us from power of death. Focus our eyes on the cross and the gift of the risen Christ. Amen

last word

Set your focus on being in the Spirit.

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