

An Invitation to the Sardis Café
The Season of Lent
Sardis Baptist Church, 2017

IN THIS LENTEN SEASON, WE WILL NOT MARCH TOWARD A CROSS. AND IN THIS LENTEN SEASON, WE WILL NOT DWELL IN DARKNESS, HOPING THAT A MIRACULOUS EASTER CELEBRATION WILL STIR US FROM OUR MONOTONY. IT SEEMS WE'VE TRIED THAT FOR TOO LONG. TRADITIONALLY, WE'VE USED THESE FORTY DAYS TO THINK ABOUT HOW CHRIST DIED SO THAT WE MIGHT LIVE. WE'VE GONE WITHOUT, AND GIVEN THINGS UP, IN THE HOPES THAT WE MIGHT KNOW CHRIST AND SERVE GOD A LITTLE BETTER. AND LENT, AND PARTICULARLY HOLY WEEK, HAVE BEEN COLD AND DARK AND BARREN.

HOW ABOUT WE TRY SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING FRESH? AT SARDIS BAPTIST CHURCH, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT CHRIST DIED SO THAT WE MIGHT LIVE. INSTEAD, WE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST LIVED SO THAT WE MIGHT ALSO LIVE.

AND YES, A CROSS HAS BEEN THE CENTERPIECE OF OUR FAITH. BUT FOR TOO LONG WE'VE MADE IT THE ONLY FOCUS. AND WHEN WE MAKE THE CROSS OUR ONLY FOCUS, WE LOSE SIGHT OF THE TABLE CHRIST PREPARED FOR US PRIOR TO THE EVENTS OF THAT DARK FRIDAY.

FOR IT WAS A TABLE, A LASTING TABLE, A TABLE THAT NOW SPANS TWO MILLENNIA, THAT STEELED THE DISCIPLES FOR WHAT WOULD COME ON SUNDAY AND THE WEEKS TO FOLLOW. AND IT IS THAT SAME TABLE THAT STEELS US FOR THE WORK OF GOD IN THE PRESENT WORLD.

IT'S AT A TABLE THAT WE FIND THE CHRIST. AND IT'S AT A TABLE THAT WE ARE OFFERED A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S BANQUET. AND IT'S AT A TABLE THAT WE ARE GIVEN THE MOST VISIBLE, PRONOUNCED, AUTHENTIC OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND HOSPITALITY TO NEIGHBORS NEAR AND FAR.

THEREFORE, IT'S A TABLE THAT WILL BE OUR LENTEN FOCUS. WE INVITE YOU TO SARDIS CAFÉ. A PLACE OF WARMTH. A PLACE OF LIGHT. A PLACE OF LOVE. A PLACE OF HOSPITALITY. A PLACE TO CURL UP IN GOD'S NOOK. A PLACE WHERE THERE'S ROOM AT THE TABLE.

INSIDE OF SARDIS CAFÉ. WE'LL GIVE THOUGHT TO HOW WE CAN INVITE A VARIETY OF NEIGHBORS TO OUR TABLE: THE DOUBTER, THE TIMID SEEKER, THE MARGINALIZED, THOSE WHO SEE DIMLY, THOSE WHO GRIEVE, AND THOSE WHO ARE PILGRIMS.

IN YEARS PAST, WE HAVE EXTINGUISHED A TENEBRAE CANDLE EACH WEEK OF LENT. THIS YEAR, WE WILL LIGHT A NEW CANDLE EACH WEEK OF LENT TO REPRESENT THE NEW NEIGHBORS INVITED TO OUR TABLE, AND THE NEW ENERGY THEIR PRESENCE WILL OFFER. AND EACH WEEK, OUR TABLE WILL TAKE ONE MORE STEP TOWARD COMPLETION.

DOROTHY DAY REMINDS US THAT WE KNOW THE LOVE OF GOD BY KNOWING ONE ANOTHER. AND SHE SAYS WE KNOW EACH OTHER, AND INDEED, WE KNOW THE LOVE OF GOD, IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD WITH ONE ANOTHER.

IN THIS LENTEN SEASON, OUR JOURNEY WILL LEAD US FROM THE GALILEE TO JERUSALEM, AND FROM JERUSALEM TO GOLGOTHA, AND FROM GOLGOTHA TO THE RESURRECTION. AND ALL ALONG THE WAY, WE'LL STOP AT A TABLE IN THE SARDIS CAFE TO TAKE MEASURE OF OUR FAITH, AND TO SHARE BOTH THE HEARTACHES AND THE JOYS OF OUR JOURNEY WITH ONE ANOTHER. AND IF WE JOURNEY WELL, WE MAY JUST HAVE TO INVEST IN A FEW MORE CHAIRS FOR OUR CROWDED CAFÉ.

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