

Matthew 6:1-18 (BCP – plus 1Cor13) (2nd March 2014)

Sunday = transition moment

- Seasons of excitement (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany)... then pause...
- ...To season of self-denial, abstinence, 'desert'

Also end of series in Matthew and start of new Lent series – Consumer Detox – how we live as Xns in a consumer society (money Sabbath)

Passage in Matthew a good pivot moment – describes disciplines of Lent that lay before us, while rounding off Jan/Feb series

Never look forward to Lent – struggle with it

- Partly own lack of discipline
- Partly issues Jesus pinpoints in passage – section of church which guilty of exactly the sort of self-promotion in Lent Jesus challenges – EXAMPLE friend who gave up alcohol; other eg's (loud complaints)

Also me – issue here is PRIDE. Remember deciding to fast weekly and feeling that I was joining the spiritual heavyweights (wrong word) – then feeling utterly humbled at how little of my life submitted to God

Lent is meant to do that to us! As Jesus makes clear, we do it for God, don't we – whether we pray or fast or give extra – we do it secretly, humbly, for the audience of one. (REPEAT – good rule)

Good lesson as prepare for Lent. Other good lesson in reading from 1Cor – think of weddings! All relationships. Why before Lent – exactly the issue of pride: v1-3 describe all those super human feats of spirituality and self-denial, and we may be contemplating some of them for this Lent. But Paul reminds us: get basics right. Do it for love. If not flowing from root of love, it's not of God.

At one level, no harm in people talking openly about what giving up – in some ways give permission for it. But as we do that, two good lessons for start of Lent: do it for the audience of One, and do it in love, above all, love for the one who first loved us. Amen.