

Dear Avoca Methodist Family,

March 2025

William Booth (1829-1912) was a British Methodist preacher and the founder of the Salvation Army. Doesn't this quote sound like it could have been written today?

*The chief danger that confronts the coming century
Will be religion without the Holy Ghost,
Christianity without Christ,
Forgiveness without repentance,
Salvation without regeneration,
Politics without God,
Heaven without Hell.*

Where is the real church today? Where is the enthusiasm? Where is the assurance of the Holy Spirit's leading? Where are the miracles? Where is the peace, love, and justice that Jesus promised? Where is God in our daily lives?

Is the church today all that Jesus would want it to be? Am I the person God has called me to be? Jesus gave His life for us. He chose to face death rather than lose us for all eternity. As we enter another Lenten season, I would suggest that rather than focusing on giving up chocolate, you would do better if you work on giving yourself more fully to God. Spend more time in His Word, your Lenten devotional, your Lenten journal, your quiet time.

Lent has somehow become a time to prove our own ability to give up chocolate or other sweets. How does that build your relationship with God? If we take a truly Wesleyan approach, we might fast for one meal a day (or even one meal a week) and donate that meal's cost to those less fortunate. Remember that one of Wesley's early followers, the first to be called Methodists, fasted so much that he became sick and had to drop out of college. I admire his enthusiasm, but I think that's a bit extreme, and defeats the purpose in the long run.

God never called us to give up meaningless treats, but He does call us to deepen our relationship with Him. In the ABCs of Salvation, C is to Commit our lives to following the example of Jesus by serving one another. Working on this aspect of Lent would be my suggestion for you (and me!) What can you do to help the marginalized in our society? How can we aid the widows and orphans today? Who is there in our community that is slipping through the cracks of government assistance?

With many government programs being trimmed, churches have an opportunity to take back the role Jesus called us to. We have largely given that role over to the government, which has formed a huge bureaucracy to sustain itself and uses a great deal of our tax money in the process. Is the church ready to pick up the slack?

Are we ready to **B**ee **A** Disciple?

Pastor Barre

