

Leaning Into Lent

February 22 through March 29, 2026

Overview

Leaning Into Lent invites the congregation to lean forward in faithful obedience. We're not darting out into a sprint, but preparing for what's next. It's like the slight shift in a runner's body at the start line. A lean that signals intention and that says the next step matters. Lent often lives in people's minds as a season of restraint or heaviness. This series reframes it as a time to move with purpose toward the hope of Easter.

Through the lectionary texts of the season, the series traces the way God forms people through wilderness spaces, deep questions, unexpected encounters, slow awakenings, and the long arc of Christ's work. Each week invites people to lean a little more toward trust, courage, clarity, or surrender, depending on the story at hand.

The Lenten podcast conversations run in tandem with the series and give the congregation a shared rhythm of reflection throughout the week. Each sermon assumes people have already spent time with the texts. This creates space for deeper preaching and a stronger connection between worship and daily life.

Series Goal:

- Help the congregation see Lent as a journey toward Easter instead of a long detour.
- Create a sense of spiritual momentum through small, intentional steps.
- Highlight the honesty and humanity of the lectionary texts.
- Build continuity between the weekly sermons and the Lenten podcast episodes.

Sermon Schedule

Sunday	Sermon Topic	Scripture
2/22/26	Leaning Into the Wilderness	Matthew 4:1–11
3/1/26	Leaning Into the Unknown	Genesis 12:1–4a
3/8/26	Leaning Into the Well	John 4:5–42
3/15/26	Leaning Into New Sight	John 9:1–41
3/22/26	Leaning Into Hope	Ezekiel 37:1–14 and Romans 8:6–11
3/29/26	Leaning Into Courage	Matthew 21:1–11

Week 1 | Leaning Into the Wilderness | Matthew 4:1–11

The journey begins where most journeys with God begin, in a place that feels uncertain. Jesus enters the wilderness with no crowd and no clear path. The congregation is invited to notice the kind of strength that forms when everything familiar gets stripped away. Leaning into Lent starts with a willingness to face what we would rather avoid. This sermon leans into the idea that the wilderness exposes what already lives inside us. It's about recognition. What voices show up when comfort disappears? What stories we tell ourselves about survival. What we reach for when God feels quiet.

Jesus does not rush through the wilderness. He meets it with honesty and trust. Lent begins by asking people to do the same.

Week 2 | Leaning Into the Unknown | Genesis 12:1–4a

God asks Abram to leave what he knows and walk toward a land he cannot see. Most people understand that feeling. Life shifts. Expectations move. Stability wavers.

Leaning into Lent means acknowledging the discomfort of not having a map. Abram steps before he understands. His first move is obedience, not clarity.

Week two shifts the source of pressure. This is no longer about inner testing. It's about external movement without internal certainty. Abram is not hungry or isolated. He is stable. God interrupts that stability with a call that lacks detail. This week invites the congregation to see uncertainty as a space where God's promises take root.

Week 3 | Leaning Into The Well | John 4:5–42

Jesus meets a woman at a well in the heat of the day. She has learned how to avoid others. Jesus sees what she carries and speaks to her with a mix of truth and compassion.

The sermon focuses on the courage of naming what we thirst for. Lent becomes a time to quit pretending we are fine and allow ourselves to be met by living water we cannot produce on our own. Her story becomes the picture of what happens when honest need is met with grace.

Week 4 | Leaning Into New Sight | John 9:1–41

A man born blind receives sight, and the world around him has no idea what to do with it. The text moves through confusion and suspicion towards the beginning of clarity. It allows us to ask questions of theodicy and providence.

Leaning into Lent means letting God correct our vision. It means noticing the ways we misread one another. It means letting go of explanations that protect our comfort. The man's steady honesty offers a model for how people can respond when God brings change.

Week 5 | Leaning Into Hope | Ezekiel 37:1–14 and Romans 8:6–11

These passages sit in the tension between what is broken and what God promises to restore. They are not sentimental; they show how hope grows in places that look finished. And they help us see that to God, nothing is truly dead.

Leaning into Lent requires patience with slow resurrection work. This week calls the congregation to trust God's breath where life has thinned out and to notice the places where revival begins with a simple word spoken into emptiness.

Week 6 | Leaning Into Courage | Matthew 21:1–11

Jesus enters Jerusalem with humility and resolve. The crowds celebrate a version of hope that does not match the path ahead.

This week invites people to sit with the courage it takes to keep moving when applause will not last. Leaning into Lent means holding firm to God's call even when expectations around us shift. Courage is not loud; it is a steady movement in the direction God sends.