



SHROVE TUESDAY

Family Devotion

adapted from Vanessa Myers, Pancake Party Devotion

Have you ever heard of Shrove Tuesday? Maybe not. But what if I asked if you had ever heard of Fat Tuesday or Pacski Day. You might say yes to those. What about **PANCAKE DAY**? If you lived in the United Kingdom or Canada, you would probably say yes you have! Three different names, but all are the same day! Today we are going to learn a little about this day.

But to get there, let's first cover another word. Have you heard of Lent? (Not lint, Lent). Lent is the 40 days before Easter. Today it is more commonly observed in the "high churches," such as Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic Churches. Some Anabaptist and evangelical churches also observe the Lenten season. Lent is meant to be a time of repentance, fasting, and reflecting on a Christian's life with Jesus. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. (Another day you might want to find out about.) The day before Ash Wednesday is known as Shrove Tuesday.

In Michigan, Shrove Tuesday is more often called Fat Tuesday or even Paczki Day. In Poland, this day is often celebrated by indulging in the traditional Polish jelly-filled pastry known as a *paczek* (*paczki*, plural). Michigan has lots of Polish immigrants, so this tradition came with them. Just north of us in Canada, it is a different yummy food you might like to eat for breakfast . . . pancakes!

So why do people eat Paczki or pancakes on Shrove Tuesday? Today people who observe Lent often choose to give something up during Lent. Sometimes they give up certain foods (like sweets). Sometimes folks "fast" other things. Back in the old days (like really old days), Christians would use the season of Lent to give up many foods like meat, fish, fatty foods, milk, and eggs. So as not to waste any food they already had in their house, on the day before Lent, they would take some of those ingredients (the milk and eggs) and make pancakes or pastries. That tradition got passed down and now it became a tradition to eat pancakes or Paczki on Shrove Tuesday.

Shrove seems like an odd word, right? What does it even mean? The name "shrove" is a version of the word "shriven" which means to confess your sins (or to tell God you are sorry for all the bad things you have done). This is a day set aside to confess sins. Why confess sin? Confession leads to freedom as God's forgiveness replaces guilt with peace.

Remember what the Bible says about forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 says: ***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*** Isn't that great to know? God forgives us of all our sins when we confess them to Him. And we can know that He forgives us no matter what because God is faithful. He never goes back on what He says to us in the Bible. His Word is true, and we can believe it and know 100% that He forgives us. All we need to do is ask.

I like the second part of that verse, too, that says *"purify us from all unrighteousness."* Those are some big words that you may not understand! Purify means *"to clean"* and unrighteousness means *"sinful."* This verse is saying that when we ask for forgiveness from God, He cleans us. Here is a visual way to think about this . . . what happens to your clothes when you play in the mud? They get really dirty! And sometimes that mud is super hard to get out. Your mom or dad might have to wash it several times just to get the stain out. And sometimes that stain may never come out!

That is what happens to our heart when we do wrong things . . . it gets dirty and messed up. And there is only ONE way to get our hearts clean. That is by seeking God and asking for His forgiveness through Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross and paid the penalty for all our sins, He made it possible for us to be forgiven and made right with God. When we ask Jesus to be our Savior, He gives us a "brand new set of clothes." All of us still get these clothes dirty and we need to "wash up" by asking for God's forgiveness. And when we do this, our hearts are clean from all the bad things we have done. Every time we come to God and ask for forgiveness of our sins, He forgives us, and our hearts are clean!

Prayer: God, you alone are Holy. Thank you for sending Jesus, who makes a way for me to be forgiven. I know I have messed up and done things that are not what You wanted me to do. Forgive me for all the wrong things I have done. May our hearts be open to hear you more clearly and follow you more closely as we prepare for the Easter celebration of Jesus rising from the dead.

PARENTS: Make today a Pancake Party Day as you celebrate the heart freedom we have through Jesus' sacrifice at Easter. Enjoy a Family pancake meal together. (Pancakes are not just for breakfast!) Talk about the freedom we have through forgiveness and confession. We encourage families to take some time to quiet solo time to reflect. Look through the booklet included in this kit for the 40 days of lent. We have included a few pancake-themed activities as possibilities for your family's Pancake Party.

When is Shrove Tuesday?

For 2021 the date is February 16th.