
Show Me your Ways, O Lord

Insights on life at Concordia Seminary
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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, How time flies! It's the beginning of April; summer is just around the bend. But before summer comes, we still anticipate the rest of Lent and the joyous Easter morning celebration, and the beginning of baseball, and graduations, rainstorms, spring's bloom and many other things. In other words, a lot still needs to happen before summer gets here!

I have this tendency in my life to move from one big event or season to the next as fast as I can. It's as though each event or season is itself an end-goal. And the time in-between? It's simply there to get me through to the next major event or season.

What a flawed attitude this is! Moving from one event or season to another in rapid succession devalues and wastes the God-given time in-between. God created us. That means our existence is a gift. It follows, then, that each moment on earth is a gift from God, whether hardship or happiness or peace or pain. Not one of these moments is to be wished away, for in each one God is (among other things) revealing Himself to be faithful, forming us to be more like His Son, and using us for His glory.

Why do I bring all of this up? I have just five weeks left here at seminary. I will graduate in May, travel to Israel in June, get married in July and begin my ministry as a pastor with my wife in August. As little as a year and a half-ago, I'd probably be impatiently waiting for school to end so I could just get to all the exciting things. Or, I'd desire school's end simply because I was sick of school!

Yet, through patient teaching, God is changing my attitude about these in-between times. How? Through reminders of His purposes and promises. Our purpose? In every period of life, we are called to follow Christ and bring His name before the nations. This brings constant meaning to everything we do because we do it for God and for our neighbors. God's promises? Our labor for Him is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58), and His Son will return for us (Acts 1:11).

Here is my encouragement to you: as long as you're here, Christ is with you and gives each moment meaning and purpose. This is often difficult to fathom during these often tumultuous, uncertain and painful in-between times. Yet, as long as we are in the body, God is with us and using us for His purposes. Entrust yourselves to God, therefore, for He is faithful and He will give you all you need to live for Him.

As I mentioned before, my time here grows short! Call Day is April 26th, and graduation is May 19th. During the 2-month period when churches were conducting interviews for team-ministry positions, I did receive one interview! It was with a church called Christ the Shepherd Lutheran in Alpharetta, Georgia – a suburb just north of Atlanta. They worship close to 300 people a weekend between two services and have a wonderful staff. The interview went quite well, so we'll see if Emily and I end up there or not. Either way, Emily and I are excited to serve God and His Church. Thank you for all you do for me! I am blessed beyond measure to have your support. You have made this entire seminary experience wonderful and I look forward to sharing these last months with you. May our risen and living Savior Jesus Christ fill you with His Spirit and strengthen you during this blessed, purpose-filled "in-between time" here on earth, anticipating the New Creation to which he will bring you on the Last Day.

Peace be with you – Joel Heckmann, 4th Year Seminarian and brother in Christ



In our Gospel lesson from John this past weekend, Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. What, I wonder, was the point of that story? In one way, it felt like a tease. Jesus can raise people from the dead, but He doesn't bother using this power today. What *was* He showing us?

Think of it like this: have you ever gone to a movie and seen a preview for a great movie? What do they show? Usually a mere 2 to 3 minutes of clips. You see lots of flashes. The purpose is not to show you the actual movie just yet; it's to show you what's coming, getting you excited for the real thing, the whole thing.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He was giving us a preview of what is to come. The actual movie – the real thing to which Jesus was pointing – is the final resurrection from the dead. He raised Lazarus not only to glorify God, but to show exactly what He's capable of doing and will do for us. The Gospel lesson is a fantastic preview for something not yet here – our own resurrection from the dead. God hasn't given us a "release date" like movie studios give for movies, but He's promised it's coming. He'll send His Son again to raise us from the dead, just as Lazarus was raised in our Gospel lesson. So, get excited! Soon and very soon, this preview will be the real thing for all of God's people.