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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Season of Lent is a time in the church year that brings mixed emotions to many people. The first emotion that I feel beginning on Ash Wednesday is one of sorrow, true sorrow for my sins, which are many and grievous. I am reminded of God's words to Adam after the fall into sin:

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and unto dust shall you return (Gen. 3:19).

In this "don't worry, be happy" society in which we live, the message that goes with the ashes on our foreheads is not a popular one. The fact that we all are sinners and will die a physical death, and that we deserve to die an eternal one because of our rebellion against God, is not something that most people want pointed out to them. Yet it is this message we all need to hear so that by the working of the Holy Spirit, through God's Word and the Sacraments, we may repent (turn away) from the way of sin and death and turn to the One who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

One of our prefaces for Holy Communion during Lent reads:

It is truly good, right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God. You bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast. Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. Therefore with angels and archangels ...

In other words, Lent is not just a season of gloom and sadness, but a season of preparation and hope. As the days get longer and the temperatures get warmer, and as we leave winter behind and enter spring, so our souls anticipate the joy that is to come on Easter when Christ's victory over sin and death is brought to its full and brilliant light.

Let us, then, prepare together during this Lenten Season. A good way to do that is by examining what God has told Christians in the past through His prophets, apostles, and evangelists. Our Wednesday midday and evening services will focus on our great hymn, *The Lamb*, which powerfully points us to the many times God uses lambs and sheep throughout the Bible in order to direct our attention to "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." I pray you will find these meditations edifying and that they will increase your knowledge and appreciation of what Jesus Christ did for us and all humankind on the cross at Calvary.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton

