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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 you will return" (Genesis 3:19 NIV).

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

One of our prefaces in the liturgy 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 ...

So 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 we will have on Easter as we celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and death on our behalf.

Let us prepare for Easter together, then, this Lenten Season. A good way to do this is by examining what God has told His people in the past through His prophets, apostles, and evangelists. The theme for our Wednesday midday and evening services is "Christ our Crucified King." I am focusing on St. Matthew's account of the passion which proclaims a king whose glory is shown not in worldly displays of power but in His mercy to sinners. I believe you will find these meditations edifying. I pray they will increase your knowledge and appreciation of what Jesus Christ did for us and all humankind on the cross of Calvary.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton

