

March 2021

Lent is a penitential season, which means it is season of repentance. We began with Ash Wednesday and in a real way reminded and marked ourselves as ones, who because of our sin, will return to dust. This isn't to flippantly say, "Yeah, we are all sinners therefore we die because the wages of sin is death." It is to realize that *my* sin is has drastic consequences, that I shouldn't take them so lightly, and that I should return to the Lord in repentance and faith.

The Scriptures say much about repentance. It is at the heart of John the Baptist's proclamation, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2), and Jesus preaches the same sermon, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). So it is a big deal, yet I think we have to unpack what repentance truly is to recognize the theme of the Lenten season.

Our Lutheran Confessions help explain it in a simple, concise way. "*Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comfort the conscience, and delivers it from terrors.*" (Augsburg Confession XII 2-5)



Lent aids to orientate us to recognize our sinfulness - which comes from the preaching of the Law - to bring about contrition, terror and sorrow, over our sinfulness in transgressing God's Law. Thus, true repentance doesn't say "Yeah, we are all sinners," but rather humbly confesses "*I myself* have sinned against God," and is stricken with that reality. Adam and Eve provide the example of what this looks like. After eating the fruit that was forbidden by God, they saw their nakedness and were ashamed. They covered themselves with fig leaves and hid from God (Gen. 3:7,8). This is a picture of terror: hiding from God and His voice.

But thankfully, Lent doesn't offer only that. Notice the second part of repentance as explained in the Confessions: *faith born of the Gospel*. This Gospel is Jesus crucified for terrified, sorrowful sinners that all their hope would be in Him. So in Lent we also continue to hear of our Lord's great sacrifice for us, His love and promises, just as Adam and Eve did after their fall. The Lord found them in the garden and spoke the Gospel to them (Gen. 3:15) and they mix that promise with faith and trust. Lent leads us to Good Friday and Easter yet all the while continues proclaiming the forgiveness found Jesus crucified and raised from the dead.

This Lent, may the Lord grant us true repentance, that we may hear the preaching of the Law and sorrow over our sin, but all the more may we hear and believe the beautiful word of the Gospel, and believing it, have life and salvation in the name and gifts of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Christ,
Pastor Suggitt

LIFE QUOTES

“We affirm again and again that God handmade all people and Jesus died for all people. And that means ALL lives are valuable and equally loved.” *Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life for Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

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