

MARCH 2023

The season of Lent is forty days. The Sundays in Lent are not counted (in case you were doing the math) because they are seen as a little break from the fast when we feast on the Body of Christ. The forty day season seeks to mimic our Lord's forty day temptation in the desert and, of course, recalls Israel's forty years in the wilderness in which God tested them. In this season of the church year, repentance, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving (giving to those in need) are put forward as practices to help Christians discipline themselves to be people of God who live not on bread alone but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God and thus shape their lives by it.

Repentance includes the recognition of sin in my life and my need to be forgiven. This is why Lent can sometimes be more subdued in nature and strike a very serious tone. Our sins are serious. They cost Jesus His life. We don't want to play games with the devil or think spiritual warfare isn't real. We were enlisted into the battle the moment we rose from baptismal waters.

So Lent can serve as a renewed reminder of that battle which we are engaged in - the fight against sin and the powers of darkness - but it also makes clear where that battle is won. Our Lord Jesus. Lent provides the opportunity to make a sort of spiritual inventory of our lives, where we have fallen short and what means God provides for us to be renewed. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving all serve this purpose that we would come to the Easter Festival with joy and renewed vigor to live as the people He redeemed us to be.

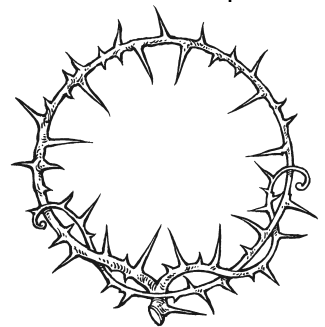
Our Lutheran Confessions have a helpful definition of repentance:

This is what true repentance means. Here a person needs to hear something like this, "You are all of no account, whether you are obvious sinners or saints <in your own opinions>. You have to become different from what you are now. You have to act differently than you are now acting, however great, wise, powerful, and holy you try to be. Here no one is godly."

But to this office of the Law, the New Testament immediately adds the consoling promise of grace through the Gospel. This must be believed. As Christ declares, "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). That is, become different, act differently, and believe My promise. John the Baptist (preceding Christ) is called a preacher of repentance, but this is for the forgiveness of sins. That is, John was to accuse all and convict them of being sinners. This is so they can know what they are before God and acknowledge that they are lost. So they can be prepared for the Lord (Mark 1:3) to receive grace and to expect and accept from Him the forgiveness of sins. This is what Christ Himself says, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in My name to all nations" (Luke 24:27). Smalcald Articles III III 3-6

Repentance worked in us by God through the Holy Spirit, turns us from sin to receive with joy grace upon grace from our Lord Jesus. The practices and disciplines of Lent are toward this cause. Go ahead and lean into Lent. The Easter Festival is not far off.

God bless you,
Pastor Suggitt



LIFE QUOTE

These two choices are vastly different: to give birth to a child or to abort it. But one thing is the same: to choose Jesus is to choose life. For Jesus holds every life—even the tiniest—in the nail-scarred palm of His hand. *A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

PRIVATE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

From the Small Catechism: Confession

What is confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

Private, or individual, confession and absolution is available by appointment with Pastor Suggitt. You may call him at 989.551.3976 to set up a time.

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