

A New Perspective

It's that time of year again! It seems as though we've just finished packing away all of our Christmas decorations for another year. Lent begins February 14th.

Lent is an important time in the Church Year. It is the time of renewal of our faith and life. It almost seems to correspond to the awakening of nature to spring. Lent points us to a renewing of what is most important and precious to us, our faith in Christ.

But we have some problems with the season of Lent. One writer laments, "Interest wanes at the very time it should grow, as the faithful pass through the several divisions of Lent toward Good Friday and Easter." In other words, it tends to become one very long Passion Week. Much of our Lenten focus is on this emphasis on the Passion Week of our Lord. I confess that I, too, along with many others, have tended to see Lent in this way. In fact, nearly all of the materials prepared by publishing houses and others use the Passion Week as the focus for the six weeks of Lent. Midweek worship services generally have Passion events or persons as their themes.

The original purpose of Lent in the early church was to prepare converts for full membership in the church. Lent was a period of intense catechetical instruction. It also helped the rest of the church to rightly prepare for the celebration of the Three Holy Days, namely, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. What started out as one day to a 40 hour fast came to cover the whole 40 days!

Lent is to be the time when the church, God's people, is built up in Christ, when it grows in the Gospel through grace. Therefore, the emphasis of Lent should be on the grace of God and upon our response in confession, prayer, devotion, and celebration. All of this prepares us for Easter.

In practical terms, our Lenten journey should take us to the baptismal font and to the communion rail; from exile and estrangement to God to home and fellowship with Him. Lent has a sacramental goal. It is not so much a "Lutheran revival," so to speak.

Lent is a time to have our faith renewed and strengthened. Because of that, we focus on preaching that progresses toward Easter. Certainly we see sin in all of its ugliness and terror, but we move onto forgiveness and on to growth.

What all this means to our 2018 celebration is this: Our midweek worship is designed to help you grow in the faith, to increase your devotion to Christ and to be a time of spiritual retreat from the world. We will focus then on major themes of the Christian life.

That's what we will be doing this Lenten season. We urge you to take time out for a retreat from your busy life to contemplate spiritual matters. It will not only help you during Lent, but it will help you celebrate the Feast of our Lord's Resurrection.

See you on retreat!

Pastor Szczesny