

March 2018

Dear Friends,

I remember learning from the time I was a child in church that Lent was a season for introspection, a time to understand our sinfulness in light of the passion of Jesus. The cross and Jesus suffering upon it were to remind us of the awful price He paid for our sins and bring us to a godly sorrow. Now that I am older I have begun to question the excess of such exercises. First of all it's hard to find a parallel to any such spiritual exercise in the New Testament. The Word of God doesn't direct us toward introspection but extrospection. We are to look to Jesus Christ the author and finisher of our faith. When Jesus addresses His disciples concerning His impending suffering He directs their attention away from them and instead to disown themselves and follow Him with the cross; that is to acknowledge their death. Secondly, one must ask if a morose, self-directed inquisition is really what God wants. Certainly one can make the case for a healthy view of one's sinfulness acknowledging our failure to do what God wants (1 John 1:5-10). Yet 1 John also leads us on to the acknowledgement of Christ's complete victory over our sinfulness (1 John 3:7-10). Excessive dwelling on our sin doesn't seem to produce Godliness but rather as John writes leads us into a false form of spirituality based on an incomplete view of Christ's finished work of taking away the sin of the world and no longer having memory of our sins. Thirdly, one must ask if such a task is really Christian or just a vestige of the Gnostic piety driven underground in the ancient Church that eventually resurfaced as an extreme form of self-denial based on a heretical dualistic view of God which actually was a revival of a perverted view of carnality (Colossians 2:4-23; especially 20-23).

Perhaps it has come time to revisit Lent with a renewed dedication to confessing the "finished" work of Jesus Christ. In pondering these things one is reminded once again of hymn lyrics; "I look not inward, that would make me wretched...but I look up into the face of Jesus." We should continue in Colossians 3:1-4.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ²Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4 KJV)

This is the true power that puts off the old and puts on the new. Constant dwelling on the old only leads to disappointment and failure. Abiding in Christ means the assurance that His work for us is complete and we are yearning for the day of its fulfillment in glory.

May we all enjoy a Christ-filled Lent.

In Christ,
Jay Weidner



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Several years ago, the Seminary board of directors established the Inter-Lutheran Seminary Endowment Fund. Funds contributed to the endowment are not used for current day to day operations. Only the annual earnings of the endowment will be used for the seminary's needs thereby ensuring the continued existence of this funding source. This is the preferred method used by many non-profit entities, especially ongoing religiously focused organizations such as seminaries.

While this is an excellent strategy, it has proven a challenge for us to actually meet the minimum funding requirements. Until now, the fund has existed but remained unfunded. By the Lord's grace we have been blessed with a large contribution to fund the Inter-Lutheran Seminary Endowment Fund. We would love to build on this generous contribution to grow our endowment into a major source of ongoing seminary support.

Although the seminary still needs the financial ongoing regular contributions of our supporters, please consider the endowment fund for your planned giving needs. The seminary has chosen the InFaith Community Endowment Fund (the renamed Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation) to administer our endowment fund. They will provide experienced legal advice to help guide you with any contribution questions done through estate planning in addition to lump sum contributions, IRAs, property and securities. For more additional information, please contact Kirk Otto, Jr. at (715) 294-4343 or Cheryl Hendrickson at (906)482-3337.

