



Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary

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Dear Friends,

12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV)

In March of 2013 and in 2021 as well, I wrote a newsletter article expressing the idea that Lent has wrongly devolved into a season of introspection and often, morose self-denial. While there remains a justification for proper self-evaluation in light of the sacrament of the altar (1 Corinthians 11:28-29) and certainly the confession of sins (James 5:16), there is no mandate in Scripture to continually dwell on one's failings and certainly no indication of there being a season of the Church Year set aside for doing so. Assuredly, one can speak of Lent as a devotional time in preparation for Easter. Yet, that devotion must be directed toward an Easter that has already occurred. As St. Peter writes:

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (1 Peter 3:18, KJV)

This year it is particularly poignant to reflect appropriately during the Lenten Season as we mourn the passing of two of our brethren who labored long in the vineyard of our Lord; Joey Seppala and Rodger Foltz. The scripture uses the apropos term "labor" to describe the work we must do here and there is a fitting parallel found in how we think of Lent. The season brings us through the difficult path of Jesus culminating in His suffering and death, the ordeal He endured to bring us to salvation, even shedding His blood for our sins. Although the picture is harsh, yet there remains a constant note of hope sounded by our Lord that His suffering is for us and that He would rise from the dead and inaugurate the day that never ends. St. Peter emphasizes this with his use of "once." The Christ has completed His work. He Himself says, "It is finished (John 19:30 KJV)." As Hebrews tells us, during Lent and always, we are to look to Jesus. Look to Jesus for what? Joy. What is that joy? Our salvation. He endured the suffering of the cross and its degradation to save us through His death and resurrection. He counted that awful happening as joy and we should too. Our two brothers labored to bring that joy to others through their proclamation of the Gospel. Just like Lent their lives pointed to the resurrection, the Easter joy they enjoy for eternity. They indeed labored but their toil has ended, they now rest in the place their Lord prepared for them by His grace. Two more witnesses have been added to that great cloud and we share the blessing of their testimony. During this Lenten Season may we be so reinvigorated to follow in the footsteps of our Lord as they did. Let us labor in the Lord's vineyard knowing:

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. (Psalm 30:5 KJV)

A blessed Lent to you and yours.

God's Peace,
Jay Weidner



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(Note correction)



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