

“FORTY DAYS”

“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.”

LSB #425 vs. 1

Many people, looking to bring some form to their spiritual lives, have read the book “Forty Days of Purpose.” While some things in it are helpful, it does come at the faith from a perspective that is insufficient (in my opinion) to bring one into the fullness of the Gospel, spending more time on what we should be doing for God, rather than what He has done for us in Christ. Yet, the idea of establishing a daily routine for prayer and meditation over a specific period of time is a good one, for which author Rick Warren should be commended.

In fact, the Church has been doing this for centuries: it’s called “Lent.” For six weeks, people have the opportunity to deepen their spiritual lives, reassess their relationships with God, and come to see again the love and mercy He shows to sinners in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

While Lent may not be as enticing as some of the modern programs, books and paraphernalia of Christian marketing, it can give more substance to one’s growth in Christ than all the shallow, glitzy stuff out there that passes for being Christian. Unlike the fad driven programs that come out every six months or so, passing themselves off as the latest and greatest aids to spiritual awakening, Lent has stood the test of time.

Granted, it can be a difficult process committing to a repentant reevaluation of ourselves, and of having to consider our part in the death of Christ, but if one is really going to grow in Christian faith and life, one must come to terms with sin and grace, Law and Gospel. It is only when we despair of our own goodness and worthiness of eternal life that we begin to appreciate all that Christ has done for us, as St. Paul says: “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).” Or as the Psalmist says: “If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with Thee there is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared (Psalm 130:3-4).”

Approached reverently and seriously, the forty days of Lent can turn into 365 days of purpose rooted firmly in the mercies of Christ, and in regular worship and reception of God’s gifts in Word and Sacrament. These things then lead to an ongoing development of our spiritual life with God, and in a fuller expression of Christian life through works of love and service to others, because the power is not from us, but from Christ working through us. And that makes all the difference.

This year, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18th, and runs through Easter Sunday, April 5th. Midweek Services following a special theme will be offered each Wednesday of Lent at 1:30 and 7:30 pm. Please join us for these additional opportunities to help you make the most of this year’s Forty Days of Lent.

***“O Lord, throughout these forty days You prayed and kept the fast;
Inspire repentance for our sin, and free us from our past.” LSB #418 vs. 1***

God’s blessings in Christ these forty days and beyond!