

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, March 2022

This month we enter the Lenten season of the church-year. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and climaxes with Holy Week, during which Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, lead us up to Easter Sunday— the feast of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, the topic we will appropriately consider this month is: **Why the season of Lent is important.**

The English term “Lent” comes from the “Saxon lencten, spring, lent, from leng, long; lenegan, to lengthen; so called from the lengthening of the days” which occurs as winter is waning each year. [Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language] For Christians, Lent is “a period of penitential reflection.” [Lutheran Cyclopedia, page 179, CPH, 1954, 1975]

Accordingly, the season of Lent is certainly important to sincere Christians because, when we look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s Holy Law (the Ten Commandments), we are convinced of the fact, “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

In last month’s Topical Bulletin, we considered: What impenitence is and why it is dangerous. We learned that it is vital to sincerely repent of one’s sins and to have personal faith in Jesus Christ as one’s Savior. Yes, we learned that impenitence is dangerous because ALL, who remain stuck in their sins by unbelief and lack of contrition, will be sentenced to never-ending death in hell; while ONLY THOSE, who sincerely repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, will be saved.

Now, since Lent is a period of penitential reflection, the Scripture verses and comments which follow will be beneficial for each of us to ponder during this season.

“Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2)

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:19-20)

Comment: God requires, God commands, that we be holy. As one reads Exodus chapter twenty, it is plainly seen that God, in His Ten Commandments, says: thou shalt, thou shalt not. God never says: just do your best and I’ll be satisfied. No, God demands perfection and He has the right to do so.

“The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psalm 14:2-3)

“God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psalm 53:2-3)

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8)

Comment: The Lord God repeatedly makes it abundantly clear that ALL naturally conceived human beings are sinful and unclean. We lie if we say we have no sin. We speak the truth if we confess, as did David the psalmist, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5)

“For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” (Psalm 5:4-5)

“Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.” (Psalm 119:137)

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Comment: The Lord God is JUST— lawful and righteous. Accordingly, God’s divine justice must be fully satisfied.

“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4)

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezekiel 18:20)

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

“For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23a)

Comment: Notice that God’s justice requires the death of the sinner’s soul and not only the death of the sinner’s body.

“If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” (Psalm 130:3-4)

*Comment: The psalmist, by inspiration of God, makes it quite clear that EVERY ONE OF US needs forgiveness of sins or we cannot stand in God’s sight. We are ALL sinners headed for hell unless we obtain God-given forgiveness of sins, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Note well the underlined words in the foregoing Scripture verse: **JESUS CHRIST our LORD is who we need; therefore, JESUS IS WHO WE MUST PENITENTLY REFLECT UPON, ESPECIALLY DURING LENT.***

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name

was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:26-35)

Comment: Jesus’ PERSONAL sinlessness is evident, since He is the HOLY THING born of the Virgin Mary after being conceived by God the Holy Ghost. Jesus is true man and true God, but one Christ, the ONLY SAVIOR!

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:14-15)

“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (Hebrews 7:26)

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Peter 2:21-24)

Comment: Again we see that Jesus Christ has NO sin of His own, for He is holy. However, Jesus bore OUR SINS in His own body. What amazing, undeserved love (grace) Jesus has shown to us sinners!

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” (Isaiah 53:3-8)

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Comment: Think about the fact that Jesus – the holy, innocent, Son of God – took our sins (the sins of the whole world) upon Himself, suffering the punishments and death in body and soul which we deserved.

“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” (Isaiah 50:6)

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” (Galatians 3:13)

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Hebrews 9:11-12)

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” (1 John 3:5)

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John 4:14)

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

“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)

Comment: The perfectly holy, innocent, just JESUS took ALL of OUR guilt and sin upon Himself, paying for ALL of OUR sins, in full, with His own holy and infinitely precious blood, which He shed while nailed to the accursed tree of the cross.

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.” (Matthew 26:36-38)

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:45-46)

Comment: Jesus suffered in His soul as well as in His body. So intense and complete was Jesus' suffering for us that He endured the pains of hell in our place, for Jesus was forsaken by God so that you and I never have to be forsaken by God.

“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” (Matthew 18:11)

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

Comment: Observe that Jesus – the Son of man – came to this earth to save sinners: the lost! “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (1 Timothy 3:16) Jesus, the Son of man, is also the Son of God— the perfect Savior, the only Savior.

Jesus our Lord is He, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:25)

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

*Comment: It's worth repeating— Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior! JESUS is true man and true God, but one Christ, the only Savior of sinners— OUR ONLY SAVIOR! God grant that each and every one of us penitently reflects on all the afore presented Scriptural facts regarding our loving Lord and our dire need for Him, because that is **Why the season of Lent is important.***

m.e.l.