

Lent is a time to remember what we would perhaps prefer to forget

The Word of God is Law and Gospel. In the Law He reveals His goodness as His wholehearted hatred of evil; He announces that sin is evil and brings us sinners under judgement and damnation with Him. In the Gospel He reveals His goodness as His love for sinners, that the Son of God took it upon Himself to suffer for us His own awful judgement against sin.

It is a challenge for faithful preachers to give each of these truths their due, so that one is not allowed to cause the other to be forgotten; and it is a challenge, also, for common Christians to do so in our own spiritual life. Christians should not despair so as not to rejoice in the goodness of God, nor should sinners take lightly the truth that sin is evil, and serious, and that we really owe God better; Christian sinners, in particular, should not - for this reason, also, that if the dreadful reality of sin is not afforded its due awareness, the goodness of God is not given due glory, that He loved sinners so as to suffer for us as He did.

The liturgical calendar of the Church is a great gift in this regard, with the season of Lent, which has just begun. The liturgical calendar sees to it that not all worship services end up being the same, and that the different aspects of God's dealings with sinful Mankind are given their due. During Lent, the Church follows our Lord Jesus on His path to suffering and death. Meanwhile, she abstains from the most jubilant elements of the celebration of our salvation, and turns our attention toward the severity of our sin, what it has caused the Son of God to suffer, and how we owe it to Him to do better, in our hearts and in our lives.

As such, Lent is a season of suffering; even though, obviously, our suffering at a season of abstinence by no means come anywhere near what our Lord Jesus has suffered for us, we do get a healthy experience of suffering with Him.

Nevertheless, the Church of Christ can never forget to rejoice in the goodness of God. And it is only by His living Word of His love and what His love has done for us that the life of God is given to us, and with it the power to do better. As such, the Gospel as God's promise of salvation must never be completely silenced, and is not, either, during Lent. It must always prevent our grief for our sin and His sufferings from deteriorating into despair, and allow such grief to lead us, instead, into a greater appreciation for the love of God, and make us to love Him ever more.

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