

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16 (NRSV)

Dear Christian friends,

Ash Wednesday begins Lent with the imposition of ashes upon a person with a pronouncement through word and symbol that we are totally mortal and of the earth. That rite reaffirms the relationship of God as Creator and us as creatures. The call that comes in Lent is that the followers of Christ Jesus would exercise their creature-ness in true Christian discipleship. The exhortation to confession in the Ash Wednesday Liturgy reads in part, “As disciples of the LORD Jesus we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love – the discipline of Lent – help us to wage our spiritual warfare.”¹ Lent means Spring as in the annual season.

Spring is a time of renewal and growth. It is a season of transition in which things which have been dormant or in hibernation change their status. They return to the normal activity associated with being alive and vital. Lent too is just that form of season for followers of Christ Jesus. We may well have been dormant or in hibernation because we felt conditions weren’t favorable to living publicly our Christian faith. The disciplines recited in the Liturgy are reminders to us of what God may lead us into so that we might bear the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit.

Lent most often is not the season that Christians relish. In fact, it is the only Church season that has not been copied commercially by the world. There are no products produced for sale - like chocolate Advent calendars, Christmas gifts, Easter bunnies – nothing to match the atmosphere associated with Lent. But Lent can be beneficial to us because it is characterized by discipline. Just as Olympic athletes have lived very disciplined lives particularly in the weeks leading to the Games – for their best performance – so too can Christians learn and be strengthened through discipline to bear their best.

Jesus reminds us about the purpose that a lamp has when it is lit. So too is a candle given at our Baptism with the words of encouragement to let the light of Christ within us shine so that others can see our good works and give glory to God. Those disciplines of Lent can make those good works be more evident, so that others can be encouraged by the goodness that God bears toward the world through God’s grace.

The stirring of new life is happening in the native plants of our world in these weeks. The intense sleep of hibernation is being reversed in those slumbering creatures nestled deep within the earth bringing them back to normal activity. The power and presence of Christ as the Light of the World within us makes us bear true divine fruit for the well-being of all creation.

Let the discipline of Lent burn brightly so all can see.

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.

¹ “Ash Wednesday Liturgy” Lutheran Book of Worship Minister’s Desk Addition. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis. 1978. p 129.