

Make Church a Part of Your Life

WEEKLY SERMONETTE

"Lent's Hopeful Song"

By Pastor Rick Rostek, Immanuel Lutheran Church

On Wednesday, Christians throughout the world began the 40-day season Lent. One prayer book describes Lent this way: "During the forty days of Lent, God's baptized people cleanse their hearts through the discipline of Lent: repentance, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Lent is a time in which God's people prepare with joy for the Paschal Feast (Easter)."

The number 40 is often associated with times of testing. Examples include the 40 days and nights of rain that Noah experienced in the Ark; the 40 years of wilderness wanderings by the Israelites after leaving their bondage in Egypt; and Jesus' 40 days of fasting that led to the temptations by Satan.

The tone of Lent is subdued. Lenten hymns highlight our sinfulness and our inability to make things right with God. Yet the focus of Lent is the object of our salvation, the One who makes things right with God on our behalf. When Jesus resisted Satan's temptations in the

wilderness, He served notice that He was not like the other humans Satan had tempted (and won over). Jesus came to Earth to overcome sin, death, and the devil.

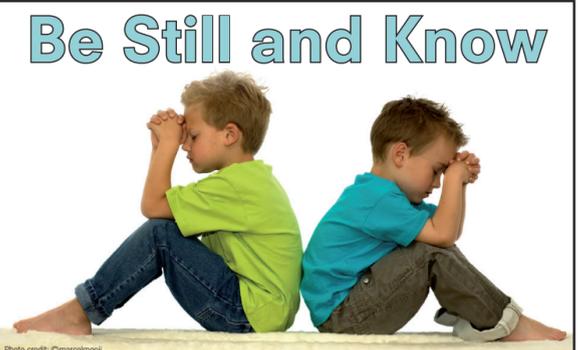
Therefore, the season of Lent points inexorably toward Good Friday, the day that Jesus was crucified for

the sin of the world. On that day, Jesus freed humans from their bondage to sin and death. By faith in Jesus, all people can have forgiveness of sin and everlasting life. That's why Lent, a time of penitence and prayer, is still a season of hope.

Paul Gerhardt, a 17th

century pastor and hymn writer, wrote the hymn *Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*. In it, Gerhardt depicts a conversation between our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus. The Father says, "Go forth, My Son... and free My children from their dread of guilt and condemnation." The Son replies, "Yes, Father, most willingly I'll bear what You command Me." Gerhardt proceeds to describe how the Father offers up His Son for our salvation. It is poignant and gut-wrenching.

Yet, in the final stanza, Gerhardt looks toward the day when he will stand before the throne of God, the blood of Christ clothing him with righteousness so that he can stand in joy beside the spotless Lamb of God. This is the hope of Lent. It prepares us for the resurrection of Easter. Christ rising from the dead gives us the same hope Gerhardt had: everlasting joy before the throne of God. It is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Be Still and Know

When we are in trouble, what do we do? Leap into action? Is doing something better than doing nothing? It is if that something is asking God for help...if we can stop trying to control things and listen for His guidance. Consider what God said to Job... "Pay attention, Job, and listen to me; be silent, and I will speak" (Job 33.31). Worship each week and grow closer to God, *be ready to listen for His wisdom.*

Weekly Scripture Reading						
Psalms	Psalms	Psalms	Matthew	Joel	Joel	Joel
27	51	57	6.1-18	1.1-20	2.1-17	2.18-27

Scriptures Selected by The American Bible Society
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