

## The 44<sup>th</sup> Epistle of John -- Shall We Skip Lent This Year?

2-17-21

OK, I've had it. Too much bad news. Too much stress and strain. Too many angry voices, hostile gestures, and ugly messages. Too many days inside, too cold, too snowy, too icy. Too many Zoom meetings, too much internet correspondence, too many technology headaches. TOO MANY DEPRESSING REALITIES.....

And now – Lent?

Lent is known by many as the depressing season, where we acknowledge our mortality, confess our sins, practice fasting, admit our weakness, and abstain from things we like. Not much fun – especially so on the heels of a year like 2020.

But I would argue the case that this is an especially important year for the season of lent, for its main purpose is not to induce misery, but to invite the peace of release made possible through grace.

All of the things I mentioned that are unpleasant to address – confession, fasting, abstaining – are attention-grabbers and awareness-awakeners to the reality of our mortal condition; we practice them not only as an essential way to make worthy progress towards better living, but also as a reminder of the journey towards the cross, from the life-giving teaching and example of Jesus to the life-diminishing suffering, betrayal, and death of Jesus to the life-returning resurrection of Jesus that not only showed us the extent of eternal life but established the hope that never fades.

These are days when we are very eager for inner peace – we desire clear consciences, harmonious spirits, affirming relationships, and worry-free living. The pathway towards such conditions necessarily travels through catharsis, the process of letting go of less life-worthy states of being. The process is ongoing and incomplete; it involves the movement between confession of our limitations and reception of graceful embrace; it is the pathway toward inner peace. It takes time; it takes repetition; it takes patience; it takes courage. But over time, it delivers what we need. It is in the practice of letting go that we find the capacity to receive growing over time – and how we receive the gift of God's peace itself.

So, let us not cancel Lent, this year especially. Let us speak the words about ourselves that are hard to hear, that we may be true to ourselves and to our God. But let us speak them with integrity and sincerity, so that God may help us let them go as no longer empowered to make us feel lesser. It is, after all, God's decree that the only thing that weighs us down is that which we refuse to let go.

God's Grace Be With You,

