

# LIFE AT THE SEM

December 2020

Ryan and Kari Maser

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- Safe travel for all Seminary students and their families this holiday season (including Ryan and Kari).
- Those who are unable to gather with loved ones and friends for Christmas and the New Year.
- For the placement process at Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne), and calling congregations.
- For Concordia Seminary, as they seek to call their next president.

## WEAK, FOOLISH, DESPISED?

*27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." – 1 Corinthians 1:27-31*

One of my “go-to” questions when I teach an Adult Bible class is to ask the class what they think of a text after we read it together aloud. It is a good ice-breaking question, and opportunity for me to learn how the class processes a portion of God’s Word. I know that we are not in class right now, but let me ask you the question: what comes to mind when you read these words from the apostle Paul?

I’ll tell you what comes to mind for me: God chooses to work through what is weak, lowly, foolish, and despised in the world. Let that soak in for a moment. God, the omnipotent creator of the universe, the only true God, decided to bring forth salvation through lowly shameful means. Not through political power and duress. Not in eloquent wisdom or a militant agenda or a promise of earthly security and fame. Not in the form of success or reliability.

Wow. How does that sit with you?

I’ll tell you one more thing: that’s not how the world defines something or someone significant. Our society thrives on power, influence, prestige, and popularity. Think about who some of the most influential people are in our culture today – chances are, they have wealth, power, are attractive and well received by others, and possess a certain level of knowledge or expertise (or maybe not). It really is no wonder that we have had so many “tug of wars” and manifestations of division this past year – because the world operates with this equation: **power + control = influence**.

But that’s not God’s *modus operandi* – a fancy Latin phrase for God’s way of doing things. His equation is **love + weakness + sacrifice = redemption**. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin teenager under the law in a stable in Bethlehem, not because God was under obligation, but out of His abundant and never-ending love. Jesus walked the earth, calling twelve low-life men to be his disciples. Jesus did not establish an earthly kingdom or exercise his divine power, but instead was obedient to the Father’s will, to the point of dying the most gruesome death on the cross. Three days later he rose in victory, not as the world defines success or victory, but as God does. In his resurrection, Jesus brings salvation, redemption, and sanctification – words that mean a person is made new in the eyes of God – to all who believe and confess him as Lord.

Through something the world views as weak, powerless, ridiculous, that is how God brought salvation, healing, and restoration to us. And that is where we find God today – in the shameful, despised, and ridiculed message of the Gospel, at work in the world through His Word and His gift of the sacraments to us. Be reminded of God’s way of doing things – this Christmas and always!

## TO US A SAVIOR IS BORN

The first semester of school is in the books! All in all, we are grateful for our heavenly Father for his provision and guidance and the blessing it has been to be back in St. Louis. While it was not the easiest semester, in terms of the COVID restrictions and related changes, Kari and I are blessed for the time to teach, learn, and grow. We are looking forward to some much-needed 'R and R time' with our family in Minnesota and Nebraska over the Christmas and New Year holidays, respectively.

I (Ryan) tested positive for COVID in mid-November, which resulted in a two-week quarantine and online learning. My symptoms were mild, and thanks be to God, quickly recovered after a week. Since we were unable to travel for Thanksgiving, Kari and I prepared our first Thanksgiving meal together. It was a learning curve, but it turned out so delicious. The days off over break allowed me some time to work on school readings and projects – and play some online cards! My quarantine lifted the first week of December, and Seminary classes have since been online. While there are some drawbacks, I am grateful that I was able to continue classes uninterrupted and did not have to wear a mask to attend class! After Christmas break, I am planning on taking a Winterim intensive course titled "Crisis Intervention" and will gear up for the beginning of the Spring Semester on February 1<sup>st</sup>. No decision has been made yet by the Seminary concerning online learning for the Spring Semester.

Kari successfully concluded the first semester of her second stint at Immanuel Lutheran, Wentzville. She is beyond thankful to have been with her kids every day in-person and not have to transition to online instruction at all during the semester – it would have been a difficult one for preschoolers! While she quarantined for 10 days while I had the virus, Kari did not contract the virus or show any symptoms. We praise God for His provision and allowing Kari to return to work in a timely fashion. As break begins for Kari, she is looking forward to taking naps, time with family, and hanging out with the nieces and nephews in Nebraska. School resumes for Kari on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you all for your support and prayers this past calendar year. As we look ahead to what this coming year brings and where God will place us, we are reminded always of those who have helped us this far in our journey. As 2020 draws to a close and we celebrate the coming of God's redemption and salvation in Jesus Christ, may you be reminded of what has been accomplished for you. May God bless your gatherings with loved ones and friends (virtual or in-person), and may you grow in Him through His Word and make Him known to a lost and confused world!

In Jesus, the newborn King,

Ryan and Kari Maser

