

# LIFE AT THE SEM

February 2021

Ryan and Kari Maser

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- Health care workers, administrators, teachers, and leaders, as they continue to navigate through the pandemic.
- Missionaries here in North America and scattered across the world, who continue to labor despite the pandemic.
- For the placement process at Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne), and calling congregations.
- For Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger, the new president-elect of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

*“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” – Hebrews 2:18*

As mentioned in January’s newsletter, I am currently taking a class on the New Testament letter of Hebrews. If you have not spent much or any time studying Hebrews, I would highly recommend it. It is a powerful letter with rich theology and a different way of looking at Jesus than, say, St. Paul’s letters. In fact, the letter to the Hebrews articulates many of the ways Christians understand Jesus – the great High Priest, the sacrificial lamb, and the founder of faith, for example.

Now, an incredible thing happens when you slow down and read Scripture, like I am in the Hebrews class. Words on a page take on meaning and shape as you ponder them and read them together with the surrounding context. Perhaps you listen to God’s Word on an app or audiobook format and your mind combs through how the words are pronounced and articulated. You begin to think about what they mean for the first hearers, what they have meant for all Christian believers, and finally, what these same words mean for you today.

God’s truth, as contained in His Holy Word, does not change. But our lives do. You may come across the same verse of Scripture at very different moments in your life and see it in a new light. The way you read a verse today may not be the same way you will read it twenty years from now, even though God’s truth remains changeless.

For example, take the verse above. There is no doubt that I have read this verse many times before. I have heard it spoken in worship as part of the lectionary readings and have studied it in a bible class before. But only within the last few weeks has it spoken to me in a different way. The immediate context (verses 14-17) tells us that Jesus partook of human flesh and blood so that he could defeat death and the devil and deliver people enslaved and subjected to these forces. Verse 17 explains more: Jesus had to become like us in every respect, not just flesh and blood, but able to be tempted as we are. In doing so, Jesus was suitable to die in our place – to be the propitiation (sacrifice) for our sin.

With this context in mind, I find verse 18 to be saying something greater than Jesus understands our temptations and suffering. Yes, Jesus is with the struggling addict who is tempted to satisfy their craving. Jesus knows the depth of this person’s temptation because he too has been there. Being fully human in a broken world, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4) and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22).

Yet Jesus did not give in to temptation. In his life and later his death on the cross, Jesus accomplished for us what we could never do on our own: fulfill God’s will perfectly. In enduring this suffering, withstanding temptation, and effectively conquering death and the devil once and for all, there is no one else we would want to come alongside us in our moments of temptation and suffering. Because he lives, we too shall live, even after all suffering and temptations shall cease on that Last Day. Jesus is more than a friend who can sympathize with our weaknesses; he is our Savior, our Salvation, our everything we cling to and hope for in our moments of trial.

## Spring? Lent?

After a very mild December and January, winter finally decided to show up in St. Louis, as it has across many parts of the nation. In the past week, we have seen historic windchills, temps, and snowfall for the area around the Seminary. While many 'snow days' have happened for Kari and a few online learning days for Ryan, we remain healthy and invested in our day-to-day work and responsibilities. We are certainly thankful for our homey, warm apartment, and things like electricity, running water, and heat that we so frequently take for granted. We also welcomed Ryan's parents who visited for a short weekend, visits with our close-knit circle of Sem friends, and the reopening of the Field House on campus for COVID-friendly workouts!

As the second month of 2021 already draws to a close, we have our sights on Call Day. Yes, it is on our minds, but so far we have not let it preoccupy every waking thought. Yet, with two short months to go, the excitement continues to build. By the time this letter is sent, we will have gone through four team ministry interviews. Each have their exciting possibilities and unique challenges – we know as well as you that there is no perfect congregation. However, we trust that God will lead us and guide us by His Spirit, no matter where He needs us.

Oh – one more thing: Lent! Like a winter that suddenly shows up, so has the season of Lent come quickly. This year, I am drawn to thinking of Lent as a journey. A journey with purpose, as we reflect on who we are as mortal, broken beings, and recognize (perhaps in a deeper way) our need for a Savior. A journey that has a stop each day, to pray, confess, and meditate. A journey, nonetheless, that does not detour in despair but arrives at an empty tomb. This journey ends in the embrace of a Savior who understands what it means to be under the weight of suffering and temptation yet has conquered it all for you and me.

We are grateful for your thoughts, prayers, and support, now and always. God's blessings to you as He guides you through this journey of Lent, and in all that you do!

Yours in Christ,

Ryan and Kari Maser

### Upcoming dates:

Call Day – April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Graduation/Commencement – May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021