A gift.   Not so many weeks ago we celebrated the gift of a Savior who would take away the sin of the world. Peace on earth and peace with God.

A gift. We now are in the midst of the penitential season of Lent, when we contemplate the cost of our sinfulness and the grace we receive through the sacrifice of Jesus. *If we confess our sins, God is faith and just and forgives our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

A gift. Jesus promised another gift as He returned to heaven. The Comforter, the Counselor who gives us the saving faith we need to recognize and receive the forgiveness offered.

I realize that the majority of readers of this devotion are well aware that they are forgiven children of God. I know that I sometimes get too complacent and comfortable in the shadow of the cross. I need reminders.

I am part Scottish, so I quote from a Robert Burns' poem "*To A Louse",*   "Oh would some Power the gift give us, to see ourselves as others see us."

Recently I had such an experience with someone who saw how forgiven children of God operate.

At my school, there are international students who are working hard to get into American universities and they feel pressures from home to get good grades. Three of my students succumbed to that pressure and cheated. The students initially lied and denied. Finally there was confession and forgiveness.

The mother of one of the students flew from China to deal with her daughter.   She is not a Christian. She witnessed the forgiveness offered to her daughter by our administrator. After revealing her shame and many tears, she said she didn't believe in God but saw God working through that love, mercy and forgiveness.

It was a new phenomenon to her, but as Lutheran Christians we are blessed to live in the state of forgiveness, in our relationship with our Heavenly Father and relationships with family, friends and co-workers.

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15)

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