Isn’t Lent a catholic tradition?”

For those who have concerns that Lent comes out of the Catholic Church, understand that there are certainly theological issues on which Protestants disagree with the Catholic Church. However Lenten observance is not one of them. By the way, the Lenten Devotion we are using is created by a highly reputable Protestant Leader and Church – Tim Keller and Redeemer Church.

Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic church on certain specified theological issues. The Lutheran church continued the observance of Lent. Martin Luther preached Lenten sermons. His objection was not with Lent itself but on the abuses of the Catholic Church in how it was observed. In his explanation of the German Mass, Luther wrote, “Lent, Palm Sunday, and Holy Week shall be retained, not to force anyone to fast but to preserve the Passion history and the Gospels appointed for that season.” It was the manipulation and abuse that resulted in the oppression of believers by the Papacy that Luther opposed.

One of the unintended side effects of Evangelicalism is that in our effort to distinguish ourselves as separate we have often thrown the baby out with the bathwater. There are certain areas where the Evangelical church has over-reacted and swung too far the other direction. Here’s a case in point: Martin Luther objected (rightly so) to the priestly confessional, especially the idea that the priest was an intermediary between the common believer and Christ. Martin Luther believed in the priesthood of all believers. His point was there no longer needs to be an intermediary. An Evangelical overreaction was to say that the believer only needs to confess to God, not men. This stands in opposition to New Testament scriptures where James encouraged believers to “confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

We should strive for theological truth and accuracy in all we do. But in intellectual honesty we need to be careful not to reject something just because it may be associated with Catholicism.

Our goal should be to practice the expressions of our faith rightly, in accordance with the truth of God’s word and the Spirit who sets us free. An example is one of the explanations on the page I sent you in the attachment about how Lent often gets reduced to the question about “what are you giving up for Lent?” which is missing the point. The point is where is my heart and will not aligned with the heart and mission of God? And where do I need to practice repentance and turning toward him in whole-hearted devotion. That is not a Catholic question; that is a Christian question.