

# March Newsletter Article

Dear Friends in Christ:

There are some early signs that an awakening of some type may be happening in our culture. It is far too early to suggest that it is a Great Awakening as in the 1730s and 1740s, but it might become that.

The Great Awakening was in some ways a response to the caustic atheism of the so-called Enlightenment washing up like a toxic tide from Europe to North America.

The particular form of the Great Awakening was the sudden recognition by not overly spiritual people that they were living their lives under the gaze of God who was not amused by their failings and selfishness. Jonathan Edwards was a big voice in this movement. His most famous sermon in 1741 was “Sinners in the hand of an angry God” which compared human beings to a spider being dangled over a fire by a large hand. Would the hand continue to hold onto the thread or release it? The sermon went viral in the colonies. People who were not very religious suddenly came to Jesus.

Today, things are a little different: *If you want to find meaning and purpose for your life, you should do an internet search on Google. You should perhaps get into a chat room with nameless, faceless friends who only have your best interest in mind. You can follow your distorted thinking to wherever it might lead you. Would you like plastic surgery? Would you like to try out a new gender? There are so many from which to choose. How about a quick way to make millions playing video games? How about surrounding yourself with friends who never disagree with you—it certainly beats being in a family. Want all the news that fits a predetermined (by others) narrative? How about a podcast by someone as wacky as you wanna be? And, if you are young, there is always meaning, purpose, and stupidity to be found on tiktok and snapchat. There are influencers there who can influence you down any primrose path you might find attractive. No matter that they shame your body and kill your soul—all your friends are on it so you have to be on it too.*

All of this is in addition to the more traditional ways of killing our souls like entertaining ourselves to death, shopping until we drop, eating all the wrong things, drinking and drugging ourselves to death, making the centering principle of our lives a sports team, or just being as secular as everyone else around us. All your friends are that way, so you have to be that way too.

Our whole broken culture needs a great awakening. Whether it happens or not is mostly up to the Holy Spirit. But Lent is a time in which it can happen to you. The primary question of Lent is “Lord, who do you want me to be today?” It is a question which excludes many other questions we might want to ask. If God is Lord, then chat rooms, and podcasts, and influencers, and peers, and other fans are not. If you look to them to answer the question of who you should be today,...well the answer will be wrong.

A good daily prayer for Lent is “God, these are the ways in which I am killing my soul...can you help me to stop?... Can you help me to be a new creation in Christ?”

Yours in Christ,

John Shepherd McKenzie