

Ash Wednesday -- February 17th, 7 PM

Gather

Welcome and Greeting

PM. The Lord be with you.

C. And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

A. Let us pray...Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, Our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C. Amen.**

Word

Readings

Joel 2:1-2; 12-17

Blow the ram's horn trumpet in Zion! Trumpet the alarm on my holy mountain! Shake the country up! God's Judgment's on its way—the Day's almost here! A black day! A Doomsday! Clouds with no silver lining! Like dawn light moving over the mountains, a huge army is coming. There's never been anything like it and never will be again. Wildfire burns everything before this army and fire licks up everything in its wake. Before it arrives, the country is like the Garden of Eden. When it leaves, it is Death Valley. Nothing escapes unscathed.

But there's also this, it's not too late -- God's personal Message! — “Come back to me and really mean it! Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins!” Change your life, not just your clothes. Come back to God, *your* God. And here's why: God is kind and merciful. He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot, This most patient God, extravagant in love, always ready to cancel catastrophe. Who knows? Maybe he'll do it now, maybe he'll turn around and show pity. Maybe, when all's said and done, there'll be blessings full and robust for your God!

Blow the ram's horn trumpet in Zion! Declare a day of repentance, a holy fast day. Call a public meeting. Get everyone there. Consecrate the congregation. Make sure the elders come, but bring in the children, too, even the nursing babies, Even men and women on their honeymoon— interrupt them and get them there. Between Sanctuary entrance and altar, let the priests, God's servants, weep tears of repentance. Let them intercede: “Have mercy, God, on your people! Don't abandon your heritage to contempt. Don't let the pagans take over and rule them and sneer, ‘And so where is this God of theirs?’”

Psalm 51:1-17

Generous in love—God, give grace!
Huge in mercy—wipe out my bad record.
Scrub away my guilt,
soak out my sins in your laundry.
I know how bad I've been;
my sins are staring me down.
You're the One I've violated, and you've seen
it all, seen the full extent of my evil.
You have all the facts before you;
whatever you decide about me is fair.
I've been out of step with you for a long time,
in the wrong since before I was born.
What you're after is truth from the inside out.
Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.
Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out clean,
scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life.
Tune me in to foot-tapping songs,
set these once-broken bones to dancing.
Don't look too close for blemishes,
give me a clean bill of health.
God, make a fresh start in me,
shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.
Don't throw me out with the trash,
or fail to breathe holiness in me.
Bring me back from gray exile,
put a fresh wind in my sails!
Give me a job teaching rebels your ways
so the lost can find their way home.
Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation God,
and I'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways.
Unbutton my lips, dear God;
I'll let loose with your praise.
Going through the motions doesn't please you,
a flawless performance is nothing to you.
I learned God-worship
when my pride was shattered.
Heart-shattered lives ready for love
don't for a moment escape God's notice.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life emerges! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.

How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

Companions as we are in this work with you, we beg you, please don't squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us. God reminds us,

I heard your call in the nick of time;
The day you needed me, I was there to help.

Well, now is the right time to listen, the day to be helped. Don't put it off; don't frustrate God's work by showing up late, throwing a question mark over everything we're doing. Our work as God's servants gets validated—or not—in the details. People are watching us as we stay at our post, alertly, unswervingly . . . in hard times, tough times, bad times; when we're beaten up, jailed, and mobbed; working hard, working late, working without eating; with pure heart, clear head, steady hand; in gentleness, holiness, and honest love; when we're telling the truth, and when God's showing his power; when we're doing our best setting things right; when we're praised, and when we're blamed; slandered, and honored; true to our word, though distrusted; ignored by the world, but recognized by God; terrifically alive, though rumored to be dead; beaten within an inch of our lives, but refusing to die; immersed in tears, yet always filled with deep joy; living on handouts, yet enriching many; having nothing, having it all.

Gospel

C. Return to the Lord, your God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Matthew 6:1-6. 16-21

“Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding.

“When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure—‘playactors’ I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

“And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for fifteen minutes of fame! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

“When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don’t make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won’t make you a saint. If you ‘go into training’ inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn’t require attention-getting devices. He won’t overlook what you are doing; he’ll reward you well.

“Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

C. Praise to you, O Christ.

Message

Hymn of Day “Savior, When in Dust to you” ELW # 601

*Savior, when in dust to you
low we bow in homage due;
when, repentant, to the skies
scarce we lift our weeping eyes;
oh, by all your pains and woe
suffered once for us below,
bending from your throne on high,
hear our penitential cry!*

*By your helpless infant years,
by your life of want and tears,
by your days of deep distress
in the savage wilderness,
by the dread, mysterious hour
of the insulting tempter's pow'r,
turn, oh, turn a fav'ring eye;
hear our penitential cry!*

*By your hour of dire despair,
by your agony of prayer,
by the cross, the nail, the thorn,
piercing spear, and torturing scorn,
by the gloom that veiled the skies
o'er the dreadful sacrifice,
listen to our humble sigh;
hear our penitential cry!*

*By your deep expiring groan,
by the sad sepulchral stone,
by the vault whose dark abode
held in vain the rising God,
oh, from earth to heav'n restored,
mighty, reascended Lord,
bending from your throne on high,
hear our penitential cry!*

Confession

PM. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

PM. Most holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another, and before the whole company of heaven, that
we have sinned by our fault, by our own fault, by our own most grievous fault. In
thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We
have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved
our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. We have shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been
true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

C. Have mercy on us, O God.

PM. Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

C. Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

Imposition of Ashes

PM. Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return

C. Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation. That we may show forth your glory in the world. By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior, Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

PM. Almighty God, have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **C. Amen.**

Meal

Communion

Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

P: In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it and gave it to His disciples saying: Take and eat; this is My body, given for you. Do this in memory of Me.

P: Again, after supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying; This is the new covenant in My blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in memory of Me.

The Lords Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Distribution music – “*Abide With Me*” Quartet

Sent

Blessing

PM. Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. C. Amen

Hymn “*Lord Jesus, Think on Me*” ELW 599

*Lord Jesus, think on me,
and purge away my sin;
from selfish passions set me free
and make me pure within.*

*Lord Jesus, think on me,
by anxious thoughts oppressed;
let me your loving servant be
and taste your promised rest.*

*Lord Jesus, think on me,
nor let me go astray;
through darkness and perplexity
point out your chosen way.*

*Lord Jesus, think on me,
that, when the flood is past,
I may the eternal brightness see
and share your joy at last.*

Dismissal

A. Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C. Thanks be to God.