



ASH WEDNESDAY BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. During Lent the people of God will reflect on the meaning of their baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty. What seems like an ending is really an invitation to make each day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God's mercy and forgiveness. From this solemn liturgy, the church goes forth on its journey to the great baptismal feast of Easter.

In a society that often avoids apology and denies death Christians gather to confess their sins and face their mortality. Tradition says that when caught in his sin, King David composed Psalm 51, and it now accompanies our Lenten journey back to forgiveness at the font.

Psalm 51:1-18

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
in Your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against You only have I sinned
and done what is evil in Your sight.

⁵And so You are justified when You speak
and upright in Your judgment.

⁶Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth,
a sinner from my mother's womb.

⁷For behold, You look for truth deep within me,
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

⁸Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

⁹Make me hear of joy and gladness,
that the body You have broken may rejoice.

¹⁰Hide Your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹¹Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹²Cast me not away from Your presence,
and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹³Give me the joy of Your saving help again
and sustain me with Your bountiful Spirit.

¹⁴I shall teach Your ways to the wicked,
and sinners shall return to You.

¹⁵Deliver me from death, O God,
and my tongue shall sing of Your righteousness, O God of my salvation.

¹⁶Open my lips, O Lord,
and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise.

¹⁷Had You desired it, I would have offered sacrifice,
but You take no delight in burnt-offerings.

¹⁸The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

The Psalm concludes with:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit:

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

P. Friends in Christ ... Jesus' death and resurrection.

Because this day is about sin, we confess both to God and one another. Because this day is about death, we recognize the many ways our attitudes and actions lead to death for ourselves and others. Our confession is cast in the plural because we assist each other in our confession. Only supported by the whole community can we face the truth of our failings.

CONFESSION OF SIN

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

The people keep silence for self-examination.

- P. Most holy and merciful God,
 C. 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.
- P. 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.
- P. 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.
- P. 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.
- P. Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to You.
 C. Have mercy on us, O God.
- P. 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.
- P. 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.
- P. 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.
- P. Restore us, O God, and let Your anger depart from us.
 C. Hear us, O God, for Your mercy is great.

Like the ancient Israelites, we enact our sorrow by marking our forehead with ashes. The palms used last year to celebrate Christ's triumphant entry to Jerusalem are now the ashes of our confession. We admit that we will return to dust, we think ahead to our own funeral. But the ashes trace exactly where the water of our baptism began our life in Christ. Now and forever, we are God's children.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

P. Almighty God, You have created us out of the dust of the earth. Bless these ashes and those who receive them. May this sign of our mortality and penitence remind us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C. Amen.

Those who desire to receive ashes may come forward. After all have returned, please rise as we conclude.

P. Accomplish in us, O God, the work of Your salvation,

C. **that we may show forth Your glory in the world.**

P. By the cross and passion of Your Son, our Savior,

C. **bring us with all Your saints to the joy of Christ's resurrection.**

P. 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.

GREETING

P. From our God Who loves us with an everlasting love, Who brings forth a new creation in Christ, Who leads us by the Spirit in the wilderness: Grace and abundant mercy be with you all.

C. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P. Let us pray. Gracious God, out of Your love and mercy You breathed into dust the breath of life, forming us to serve You and our neighbors. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness, 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 +

FIRST READING: FIRST READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Because of the coming Day of the Lord, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community reminds God of His gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

Blow the trumpet in Zion;

 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,

 for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—

²a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them in ages to come.
¹²Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to Me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.
¹⁴Who knows whether He will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind Him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD, your God?
¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
¹⁶gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her canopy.
¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.
Let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD,
and do not make Your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?' "

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10

Each day, each Lent, is the acceptable time in which we are called to be reconciled to God and such reconciliation is worth more than all other possessions.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. ^{6:1}As

we work together with Him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For He says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! ³We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.



Lent gives us forty days to return to the font of forgiveness and life. We embark on this journey by receiving the gospel.

³ By your hour of dire de - spir, by your ag - o - ny or prayer,
⁴ By your deep ex - pir - ing groan, by the sad se - pul - chral stone,

HOLY GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

From this excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount come the three classic disciplines of Lent: giving alms, praying and fasting. These behaviors are signs that what we treasure most is God, rather than the stuff of our selves.

C. (Spoken) Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

C. (Spoken) Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN *Savior, When in Dust to You*



1 Sav-ior, when in dust to you low we bow in hom-age due;
 2 By your help-less in-fant years, by your life of want and tears,
 3 By your hour of dire de-spair, by your ag-o-ny of prayer,
 4 By your deep ex-pir-ing groan, by the sad se-pul-chral stone,



when, re-pen-tant, to the skies scarce we lift our weep-ing eyes;
 by your days of deep dis-tress in the sav-age wil-der-ness,
 by the cross, the nail, the thorn, pierc-ing spear, and tor-tur-ing scorn,
 by the vault whose dark a-bode held in vain the ris-ing God,



oh, by all your pains and woe suf-fered once for us be-low,
 by the dread, mys-te-rious hour of the in-sult-ing tempt-er's pow'r,
 by the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dread-ful sac-ri-fice,
 oh, from earth to heav'n re-stored, might-y, re-as-cend-ed Lord,



bend-ing from your throne on high, hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!
 turn, oh, turn a fa-v'ring eye; hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!
 lis-ten to our hum-ble sigh; hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!
 bend-ing from your throne on high, hear our pen-i-ten-tial cry!

We will use the Apostle's Creed throughout Lent. The Apostles' Creed is the baptismal creed, the confession of faith made for us at baptism, and by us when we renew or affirm our baptisms. The song, taken from Psalm 51, reminds us of our Lenten discipline and asks God's help in keeping it, "uphold me with Your free Spirit."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day He rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Led by Christ in our journey of repentance and moved by His compassion, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

O God, You gather Your people in solemn assembly. Grant us grace, so that we may observe a holy Lent through fasting, prayer, and works of love. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. **hear our prayer.**

O God, You give bountifully to Your creatures, Provide for all animals whose winter rations are dwindling, and prepare the earth for renewal in coming weeks. Lord, in Your mercy,
C. **hear our prayer.**

O God, You move Your people to cry out for justice. Bring to light all the ways in which we oppress others. Turn us from our complacency, and move us to work on behalf of the oppressed. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

O God, You are our hope in the midst of despair, our help in the midst of sorrow, and our consolation in the midst of affliction. Grant comfort to all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, especially Emily, Angie, Shirlee, Bill & Karen Pohlen, Bill Ningen, Carol, Sylvia, Jim and Norma, and support medical personnel and caregivers who attend to all in need. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

O God, You turn people from their sin to live for You alone. Renew us in the covenant of baptism, that we might live in hope of a creation reconciled and restored. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

O God, You are our life and our salvation. We give You thanks for the righteous who have died in faith. Inspire us by their example to proclaim Your steadfast love and open our lives to the cleansing and renewing power of Your abundant forgiveness. Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to You, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE

OFFERING/OFFERTORY

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right spir -
it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re-store to me the
joy of your sal-va - tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P Holy God,

C You provide us with every gift of creation, and You quench our thirst with living water. Receive our offerings and make our lives bread for the hungry and streams in the wilderness, signs of the abundance of Your grace in Jesus Christ. Amen.

+ MEAL +

THE 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 God thanks and praise.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

P. Blessed are You ... pouring out His life for the world.

C. Amen.

P. In the night in ... and proclaim the mystery of faith.

C. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P. Gracious God ... both now and forever.

C. Amen.

LORD'S 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, forever and ever. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

P. The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. C. Amen.

The closing prayer summarizes the intent of Ash Wednesday and Lent: for forty days we will focus on returning to our Baptism by giving alms, fasting from self-indulgence, finding our treasure only in Christ. It is good that we have forty days to work on all this.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P. Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew in us the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C. Amen.

✠ SENDING ✠

BLESSING

P. Almighty God the Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

C. Amen

CLOSING HYMN *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

1 When I sur - vey the won - drous cross On which the
 2 For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the
 3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, Sor - row and
 4 Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, That were a

prince of glo - ry died, My rich - est gain I
 death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that
 love flow min - gled down. Did e'er such love and
 trib - ute far too small; Love so a - maz - ing,

count but loss And pour con-tempt on all my pride.
 charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to his blood.
 sor - row meet, Or thorns com-pose so rich a crown?
 so di - vine, De - mands my soul, my life, my all!

Adapting the conclusions of five of the New Testament letters, this lengthy dismissal sends us out for our forty days of baptismal renewal.

DISMISSAL

- P. 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. Amen.

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