

**REDEEMER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ASH WEDNESDAY, February 17, 2021**

*Rev. Soren Flessen*



*On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.*

Prelude:

**+GATHERING+**

*Greeting*

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who is present, who gives life, who calls into existence the things that do not exist.

**C: And also with you.**

***The Prayer of the Day***

**C: Almighty and ever living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may obtain from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

***Hymn:***

**“Lord, Let My Heart be Good Soil”**

**Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.**

**Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is understood.**

**When my heart is hard, break the stone away.**

**When my heart is cold, warm it with the day.**

**When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.**

**Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.**

*The first reading is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Joel.*

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 declares that God is gracious and asks God to spare the people lest the nations doubt God's power to save.*

<sup>1</sup>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—

<sup>2</sup>a 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.

<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

<sup>13</sup>rend 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.

<sup>14</sup>Who 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?

<sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly;

<sup>16</sup>gather 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.

<sup>17</sup>Between 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?'"

**Song:**

**“Be Thou my Vision”**

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:  
thou my best thought by day and by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**
  
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.  
Thou my soul’s shelter, thou my high tower,  
raise thou me heav’nward, O Pow’r of my pow’r.**
  
- 3 Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
thou, and thou only, first in my heart,  
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.**
  
- 4 Light of my soul, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven’s joys, O heaven’s Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

*The second reading is from the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians*

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20b – 6:10

*The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God’s reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.*

<sup>20b</sup>We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For 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! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the

power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

L: Word of God. Word of Life.      **C: Thanks be to God.**

***Gospel Acclamation***

**C: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory**

*The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.*

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.*

Jesus said to the disciples: <sup>1</sup>“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.

<sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“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. <sup>6</sup>But 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.

<sup>16</sup>“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. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so 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.

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

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*Sermon*

**Sermon Hymn:**      **“Softly & Tenderly Jesus is Calling”**  
1    **Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,  
calling for you and for me.  
See, on the portals he's waiting and watching,  
watching for you and for me.**

**Refrain**

***"Come home, (Come home,) come home! (come home!)  
You who are weary, come home."  
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,  
calling, "O sinner, come home!"***

2    **Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,  
pleading for you and for me?  
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,  
mercies for you and for me? *Refrain***

3    **Oh, for the wonderful love he has promised,  
promised for you and for me!  
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,  
pardon for you and for me. *Refrain***

**Invitation to Lent**

P: Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

**Confession of Sin**

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

**C: 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.**

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: 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.**

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

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

*Imposition of Ashes*

P: May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

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 his 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.**

*Prayers of Intercession:*

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you created the earth and all its inhabitants and you declared that it is good. Protect mountains and valleys, animals and plants, and direct us to be good stewards of all you have made.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you desire peace. Direct governments and leaders to work for the well-being of all people and raise up advocates to speak and serve on behalf of the downtrodden.

Lord, in your mercy, **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*) and support caregivers who attend to all in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you are love, and you call us to love one another. Accompany with your grace those journeying toward baptism and call us all to repentance as we prepare to celebrate Christ's death and resurrection.

Lord, in your mercy, **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.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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

**+MEAL+**

*Words of Institution*

***Lord's Prayer (spoken):***

**C: 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.**

*Invitation to Holy Communion*

P: Jesus draws the whole world to himself. Come to this meal and be fed.

*Distribution of Holy Communion*

*Prayer after Communion*

P: God of steadfast love, at this table you gather your people into one body for the sake of the world. Send us in the power of your Spirit, that our lives bear witness to the love that has made us new in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C: Amen**

*Blessing after Communion*

P: Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation. Holy God, speaking, spoken, and inspiring, ✠ bless you, unbind you, and send you in love and in peace.

**C: Amen**

**+SENDING+**

*Blessing*

P: You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you ✠ that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

**C: Amen**

***Sending Hymn:* "Change My Heart O God"**

**Change my heart, O God. Make it ever true.  
Change my heart, O God. May I be like you.  
You are the potter, I am the clay;  
Mold me and make me, this is what I pray.  
Change my heart, O God. Make it ever true.  
Change my heart, O God. May I be like you.**

*Dismissal*

P: Marked with the cross of Christ, go forth to love and serve the Lord

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*Postlude*



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