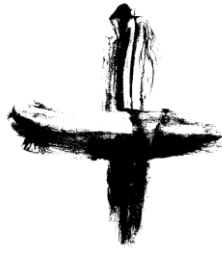




ASH WEDNESDAY

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.



We gather in silence.

Psalm 51:1-12

P: ¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

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

P: ³For I know my offenses,
and my sin is ever before me.

C: ⁴**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.**

P: ⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my mother's womb.

C: ⁶**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

P: ⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

C: ⁸**Let me hear joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

P: ⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my wickedness.

Let us share now our desire for God's forgiveness as we sing together
the conclusion of the Psalm:

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 un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,

and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit 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,
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.**

First Reading

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

¹Blow 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?' "

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20b – 6:10

^{20b}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.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Lenten Verse

ELW, page 151



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Gospel:

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the sixth chapter.

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

P: [Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“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.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The pandemic has taken a huge toll when it comes to people in our congregation, our community, and our country. Some of us are experiencing fatigue, the kind I wrote about in this month's edition of *The Quill*. There is a difference, I pointed out, between being tired and being tired of something, between lacking enough sleep and lacking the energy to do things, between physical fatigue and what I call existential fatigue.

Excessive screen-time may be part of the problem. Think about it. How much time do you, your friends, your colleagues, your children, or your grandchildren spend in front of a computer, especially compared to last year at this time? Everything from meetings and seminars to presentations, classes, and even this message happens online. No wonder we hear of "Zoom fatigue." Life, for those of us like Joel who love puns, has become all-*conzooming*.

In all seriousness, however, we know that too much screen-time has become a problem, especially for children who need to balance instruction and learning with physical activity. But it's not only young people who struggle. I think of parents who, on top of parenting and working full time, must also play the role of educator until their kids can safely return to school. I think also of caregivers, of family members especially, who must find creative ways to care for loved ones in hospice and hospitals given the restrictions that have been placed on visitation.

The fact that the pandemic has taken such a toll makes the season we enter this evening more significant than usual. What better time to take even a brief step back and **reflect**, find opportunities for **renewal**, and get ourselves **ready** for Holy Week than the present?

Over the coming weeks we will feature, as we are tonight, hymns that touch upon the invitation to reflect, to experience renewal, and to prepare as a response to the burdens we have carried over the course of the pandemic. We will also tease these themes out of our readings from Scripture as well as from the content of each week's liturgy. Consider a few examples from this evening's Ash Wednesday service —

Our Prayer of the Day provides for us the opportunity to **reflect** upon the fact that life is a fleeting gift, that we are dust inspired by the breath of life. It's not just that our appearance on earth means we won the cosmic lottery, as the famous atheist Richard Dawkins would say, one where the odds of our existence are *overwhelmingly* stacked against us. It's that the gift comes from something even

deeper, from God, the animating force of life who, totally out of unmerited, unconditional love, breathed into dust the breath of life each of us now has.

The imposition of ashes, which we will invite you to do yourself this year, echoes the Prayer of the Day with words of great solemnity: “Remember that I am dust, and to dust I shall return.” True, a critic may deride the saying of these words as an exercise in morbidity. But that’s not their purpose. We impose the ashes upon our foreheads to cultivate a sense of *gratitude* for the one-in-a-trillion life we have and to remember its source in our life’s deepest ground, namely, God.

When it comes to **renewal**, our second theme of the season, Jesus reminds us in tonight’s Gospel reading to set aside the need for acknowledgement from others when we pray or give to those in need. We do these things, rather, as a response to the pure and total gift of life that come from the animating source of our being (God). This freedom from the need for recognition from others marks one way we can experience renewal.

“Bless Now, O God, the Journey,” our Hymn of the Day, likewise conjures up the possibility of renewal as we set out on a journey through “noise and silence, the way of give and take.” These words point to the proliferation of distraction in our lives along with a way of being that reduces human life to labor and consumption. Can we resist this cycle even for a moment and experience what the next verse refers to as “holy freedom” and thus renewal, or are we bound to it completely?

Both our Hymn of the Day and our Prayer of the Day speak, finally, to the need for us to **prepare** for the journey ahead. “Strengthen us to face our mortality,” we pray, for the summons of death – as Martin Luther says – comes to us all. We turn, then, with Christ toward Jerusalem where he must face mortality. We ask God to help us prepare for *his* death, a death which reminds us of ours as well as those whom we love, trusting that we are not alone.

Can this journey renew us and heal us, giving us new life as we paradoxically acknowledge the reality of death? I think it can, so long as we commit ourselves to it. This Lent, therefore, I invite you to reflect on the gift of life you have from God; to seek renewal by pausing, by unplugging (however briefly), and to prepare as we journey to the foot of the cross and then, beyond it, to the promise of new life that awaits us not only on the other side of the grave but also on the other side of this pandemic.

In Jesus name,

Amen

Hymn of the Day

Bless Now, O God, the Journey

ELW Hymn 326

1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,
2 Bless so - journ-ers and pil - grims who share this wind-ing way;
3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.

the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.
your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus-tains the day.
We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,

The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun-tain round,
We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;
but wait-ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.

then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.
to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.
Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

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 proclamation of the Word until the day when we can once again receive the sacrament in person. Let us continue our journey through these 40 days to the great three days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Silence for reflection and self-examination precedes the confession.

Confession

P: Most holy and merciful God:

C: We acknowledge and confess that we have sinned against You 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.
We have not loved our neighbors as we should.
We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: We have ignored Christ in the face of the poor.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: We live in self-indulgent ways,
and exploit other people.

C: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: We neglect You in prayer and worship,
and fail to share the faith that is in us with others.

C: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: We look away from human need and suffering
and are indifferent to injustice and cruelty.

C: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: We judge others falsely
and are uncharitable in our thoughts toward our neighbors;
we harbor prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us.

C: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: In our waste and pollution of your creation,
we are destroying what You have made.

C: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Restore us, O God, and create in us clean hearts.
Empower us to see You in others and through all of your creation.

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



Imposition of Ashes

Those who desire to impose ashes may do so by taking them and making the sign of the cross on your forehead as you say these words:

“Remember that I am dust, and to dust I shall return.”

P: Gracious 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 the Church

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

A brief silence.

P: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church to seek unity whenever possible and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: O God, you sustain the earth all its inhabitants as its deepest ground and source. Help us protect what you have declared good: mountains and valleys, animals and plants, and direct us to be good stewards of all you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: 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.

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: 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 and support caregivers who attend to all in need. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

P: O God, you are our life and our salvation. We give you thanks for the righteous who have died in faith, including now our beloved Linda Olson.

Inspire us by her example of kindness and generosity toward others, and receive her into your eternal care. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

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

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

C: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;

be of good courage;

hold and support the weak;

help the afflicted;

honor all people;

love and serve God,

be Christ to others,

and rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: Thanks be to God.

This video service may be viewed on our Queen Anne Lutheran YouTube channel. A link is also available on our website's "WordOut!" page.

Join us every Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM during Lent for a Zoom worship devotional service; find the link in our Friday emails and on the WordOut! page.

Serving as Leaders of Worship Today

**Presiding Minister
Cantor**

**The Rev. Daniel Peterson
Kyle Haugen**

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