



**ASH WEDNESDAY  
SERVICE**

**FEB 17, 2021  
7 PM**

# *Sycamore Baptist Church*

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# Ashes

Ash Wednesday used to begin a season of 40 days of deadly serious penance. It included a type of fasting far stricter than most diets today, embracing the absence of all life's pleasures and enjoyments. There is evidence that marking the face or body with ashes began in Gaul in the 6th century and was at first confined to public penitents doing penance for grave and notorious sin, whom the clergy tried to comfort and encourage by submitting themselves to the same public humiliation. For our spiritual ancestors, the people of Jewish and other Near Eastern cultures, wearing ashes was a sign of mourning and lamenting. Ashes were usually associated with sackcloth, which was the clothing worn to mourn the death of a beloved or to lament a personal or communal disaster. Humans are the only species we know of who are capable of contemplating their own death. Yet few of us do. Ash Wednesday challenges us to reflect on our own death so that we can truly embrace life. The mark of ashes reminds us that only by a Christ-like death can we experience the promise of Easter's life.

## PRELUDE

## CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER

L: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

**ALL: His love endures forever.**

## WELCOME

## SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:12-13

12 "Even now," declares the Lord,  
"return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning."

13 Rend your heart  
and not your garments.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in love,  
and he relents from sending calamity.

## WORSHIP IN SONG\*

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

- Come thou Fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
Sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,  
Mount of God's unchanging love.*
- Here I raise my Ebenezer;  
Hither by thy help I've come;  
And I hope, by thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed his precious blood.*
- Oh to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for thy courts above.*

## LIGHTING OF CHRIST CANDLE\*

Jesus said "I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) As we light this candle may it remind us that He is always here, even in the darkest times.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS & CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Psalms 24:9-10

9 Lift up your heads, you gates;  
lift them up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.

10 Who is he, this King of glory?  
The Lord Almighty—  
he is the King of glory.

Isaiah 2:10

10 Go into the rocks, hide in the ground  
from the fearful presence of the Lord  
and the splendor of his majesty!

**RESPONSE: Be still, be still. Know that He is God.**

1 Chronicles 29:11

11 Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power  
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.  
Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;  
you are exalted as head over all.

Psalms 8:1-4

1 Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory in the heavens.

2 Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

**RESPONSE: Be still, be still. Know that He is God.**

Isaiah 6:1-3

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:  
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory."

Isaiah 6:4-7

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

**RESPONSE: Be still, be still. Know that He is God**

## WORSHIP IN 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 or 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 great Father, I Thy true son,  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.*
3. *Riches I heed not, or man's empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.*
4. *High King of heaven, my victory won,  
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

## CALL TO CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

### SILENT REFLECTION AND PRAYER

### RESPONSIVE READING FROM PSALM 51

Leader: According to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God**

Leader: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God**

Leader: Surely I was sinful at birth, yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God**

Leader: Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God**

Leader: Create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God**

Leader: I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you are my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God**

Leader: Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

**All: Have mercy on me, O God. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.**

## **WORSHIP IN SONG\***

*Rock of Ages, Cleft For Me*

1. *Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save from wrath and make me pure.*
2. *Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;  
These for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone:  
In my hand no price I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling.*
3. *While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When mine eyes shall close in death,  
When I rise to worlds unknown,  
And behold Thee on Thy throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.*

## **PRAYER**

### **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

You are invited to come forward to reclaim the dust with which you were formed. Come forward to recognize your need for the God who created you and for the savior who desires to wash you clean.

## **WORSHIP IN SONG\***

*Holy, Holy, Holy*

1. *Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*
2. *Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.*

## **BENEDICTION**

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\* Please stand if able.