

***Lutheran Church of the Master &  
The Lutheran Church of the Covenant***



*Ash Wednesday  
February 17, 2021*



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

# 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.*

Greeting

Confession

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

*Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.*

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

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 you as the Holy Spirit.  
**Have mercy on us, O God.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gathering Hymn    *Our Father We Have Wondered*

#606

1 Our Fa - ther, we have wan - dered and hid - den from your face;  
 2 And now at length dis - cern - ing the e - vil that we do,  
 3 O Lord of all the liv - ing, both ban - ished and re - stored,

in fool - ish - ness have squan - dered your leg - a - cy of grace.  
 be - hold us, Lord, re - turn - ing with hope and trust to you.  
 com - pas - sion - ate, for - giv - ing, and ev - er - car - ing Lord,

But now, in ex - ile dwell - ing, we rise with fear and shame,  
 In haste you come to meet us and home re - joic - ing bring,  
 grant now that our trans - gress - ing, our faith - less - ness may cease.

as, dis - tant but com - pel - ling, we hear you call our name.  
 in glad - ness there to greet us with calf and robe and ring.  
 Stretch out your hand in bless - ing, in par - don, and in peace.

## Prayer of the Day

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.

**Amen.**

## First Lesson

Isaiah 58:1-12

*Shortly after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, the people were troubled by the ineffectiveness of their fasts. God reminds them that outward observance is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked. Sincere repentance will lead to a dramatic improvement of their condition.*

<sup>1</sup>Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.

<sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me  
and delight to know my ways,

as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness  
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgments,  
they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup>“Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,  
and oppress all your workers.

<sup>4</sup>Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight  
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today  
will not make your voice heard on high.

<sup>5</sup>Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,  
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?

<sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator shall go before you,  
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,  
<sup>10</sup>if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.

<sup>12</sup>Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

<sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.**

<sup>3</sup>For I know my offenses,  
and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup>**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.**

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.

<sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

<sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

<sup>8</sup>**Let me hear joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

<sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my wickedness.

<sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.**

<sup>11</sup>Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

<sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways to offenders,  
and sinners shall be restored to you.

<sup>14</sup>**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

<sup>15</sup>O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

<sup>16</sup>**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.**

<sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

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

The holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[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.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

The Rev. Donald Frantz

Hymn of the Day *What Wondrous Love Is This*

#666

1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What  
 2 When I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when  
 3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; to  
 4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and

won - drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is this  
 I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when I was sink - ing down  
 God and to the Lamb I will sing; to God and to the Lamb,  
 when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free,

that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my  
 be - neath God's righ-teous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my  
 who is the great I AM, while mil - lions join the theme, I will  
 I'll sing God's love for me, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing

soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul?  
 soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul.  
 sing, I will sing, while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing.  
 on, I'll sing on; and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on.

## Apostles' Creed

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come 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 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 whole 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 all leaders to work for the well-being of your 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, 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.**

Music Interlude *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy* (LONG)

*Please use this time to for your own personal prayers with God.*

Prayer

In these days of crisis, our Lord and our God, we are unable to receive your sacrament together, though we deeply long for it. With the whole church of every time and every place we praise you as the Holy Spirit, our Advocate, praying on our behalf and strengthening our faith. Unite us with you, and with the faithful around the world. As you healed the centurion's servant from afar, heal our wearied soul with your holy presence; for while we are separated from our community, we can never be separated from you. In your Son's precious name, we pray.

**Amen.**

The 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.**

Imposition of Ashes

Blessing

You are what God made you to be:  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
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.  
**Amen!**

Sending Hymn *The Glory of These Forty Days*

#320

1 The glo - ry of these for - ty days we cel - e -  
 2 A - lone and fast - ing Mo - ses saw the lov - ing  
 3 So Dan - iel trained his mys - tic sight, de - liv - ered  
 4 Then grant, O God, that we may, too, re - turn in

brate with songs of praise; for Christ, through whom all  
 God who gave the law; and to E - li - jah,  
 from the li - ons' might; and John, the Bride - groom's  
 fast and prayer to you. Our spir - its strength - en

things were made, him - self has fast - ed and has prayed.  
 fast - ing, came the steeds and char - i - ots of flame.  
 friend, be - came the her - ald of Mes - si - ah's name.  
 with your grace, and give us joy to see your face.

Text: Latin hymn, 11th cent.; tr. Maurice F. Bell, 1862–1947, alt.  
 Music: ERHALT UNS, HERR, J. Klug, *Geistliche Lieder*, 1543  
 Outside USA: Text from *The English Hymnal*, © Oxford University Press 1906. All rights reserved.

## Dismissal

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

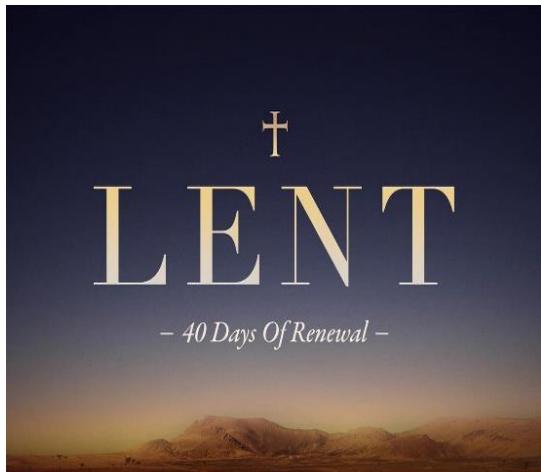
**Thanks be to God!**

Postlude *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word* (GIESCHEN)

## *Our Worship Leaders*

Presiding Minister  
Assisting Minister  
Organist  
Vocalist  
Recorder

The Rev. Donald Frantz  
The Rev. Bradley Ross  
Robin Crawford  
Carla Cashman  
Jennifer Lasher-Dobush



*We invite you to continue joining us virtually for our midweek Wednesday gatherings. Each week you will receive an email with two video links: one with a prayer, Scripture reading, and a brief message from one of the pastors, and the other video will be for Holden Evening Prayer, that we encourage you to*

*sing along from home. Even at a distance away, we remain a part of this journey of renewal during this season of Lent together!*

## *The Great and Holy Leveling Field*



“There but for the grace of God go I.”

I’ve heard this uttered and may have even said it myself a time or two. It’s usually said in response to seeing some unfortunate soul pass by with some known, perceived or just surmised devastation.

I know it’s often said with the best intentions, and surely we should draw lessons from what we see around us every day. But I’ve come to see it as a cruel statement. It turns someone else’s bad situation into your own private lesson, which is egotistical at best and dehumanizing at worst.

I once heard someone say that God put a person with a debilitating disease in their life to help them appreciate what they themselves have. That’s not only theologically but also morally indefensible.

One person’s tragedy is not my primer lesson. I may glean wisdom from the situation but, at its core, the situation is their tragedy.

Too often, we look at other people as the plumb line with which we gauge our own lives—with troubling results.

Perhaps this is why Ash Wednesday remains one of the holiest days of the year for me. Some see it as a public display of piety, which it certainly can turn into, but I see it as the great and holy leveling field of the liturgical year.

We are made of dust, beloved. And we will return to it. We will return to dust with all our ill-advised statements, all our greed, all the times we shoved a needle in our veins to feel or not feel. We'll all return to dust with the good times buried in our hearts, with our tear-stained cheeks and with all those secret devastations no one knows about except for God and the diaries of our souls.

That cross of ash is a sign of both penitence and hope. We live with our “sorry” displayed for the world to see on Ash Wednesday, but in that act we also make a bold claim. No longer is it “There but for the grace of God go I.” Now, on this holy day, we say in a humble but confident response, “Here by the grace of God go I.”

Here by the grace of God go I. And you.

We stream from our sanctuaries, our “ashes to-go” street-corner stations and our early-morning Masses, walking with a little more weight on our foreheads but a little less weight on our souls.

We become walking beacons of messy redemption who no longer must compare ourselves to anyone else because we're all marked with the same mark, stamped with the same grace and held in the same arms.

Here by the grace of God go we.

*Originally published February 26, 2020 at [LivingLutheran.org](http://LivingLutheran.org).*



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