

Elim Lutheran Church
Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021



Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Prelude

O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days

Charles Callahan
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Announcement

For those of you who are worshipping live, be sure you have picked up your communion elements and your ashes at the back of the sanctuary. And if you are worshipping virtually, please have your wine or juice and a small piece of bread or cracker nearby. If you picked up ashes from the church office, have those nearby as well. If you have no ashes, you may make the sign of the cross on your forehead without the ashes.

Greeting

The grace and peace of the Lord, our God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Responsive Reading – Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

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

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

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

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:1-17 NRSV)

Imposition of Ashes

In this Psalm, we have confessed our sins and asked for God's forgiveness. Just as we were marked with the sign of the cross at our baptisms, we are now marked with the sign of the cross on our foreheads. This cross is a sign our humanity and our humility. Let us together mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Gathering Hymn

O Lord, throughout These Forty Days

Text: base on Claudia f. Hernaman

Music: A. Davisson, *Kentucky Harmony*

O Lord, throughout these forty days
you prayed and kept the fast;
inspire repentance for our sin,
and free us from our past.

You strove with Satan, and you won;
your faithfulness endured;

lend us your nerve, your skill and trust
in God's eternal word.

Though parched and hungry, yet you prayed
and fixed your mind above;
so teach us to deny ourselves
that we may know God's love.

Be with us through this season, Lord,
and all our earthly days,
that when the final Easter dawns,
we join in heaven's praise.

The Word



The Old Testament reading for tonight is from the 2nd Chapter of Joel.

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—
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.

Even , says the LORD,
 return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
 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.
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations. (Joel 2:1-2,13-14)

Here ends the reading from Joel

The New Testament reading is from the Book of 2nd Corinthians beginning at the 5th chapter.

^{20b}We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made himself 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. (2 Corinthians 5:20b – 6:10)

This ends the New Testament reading.

The Gospel for Ash Wednesday is from the 6th Chapter of Matthew.

Glory to You, O God.

[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.” (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21)

Word of God. Word of Life.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Message

This is Ash Wednesday. It's the first day of the 40 days of Lent. Some people detest Lent. I've heard comments about Lent, comments like: Lent is so dreary; the music of Lent sounds so unhappy; the days of Lent seem to last forever. For some pastors, Lent is tiring. You see, there are two sermons to prepare every week. And then you come to Holy Week – Passion or Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, all followed up by the blessed day of Easter. However, the 40 days of Lent are a reminder of our humanity, our sinfulness, and the knowledge that one day our life will end.

Because of our wayward actions, our sins, known and unknown, we NEED Lent.

The imposition of ashes is a visible sign of our humility and humanity. In Genesis, we read that God forms man from the dust of the earth. At the end of our earthly life, we return to dust. The visible cross on our foreheads recalls the permanent sign of the cross, that marks us in our baptisms. This permanent cross promises the forgiveness of our sins. All our sins, and the gift of life eternal.

Lent is also a time for humility. God calls us to be humble – humble in our giving, humble in our actions as servants, and humble in repentance for our sins. From the very

beginning of human life, our brother Adam and sister Eve brought sin into this world. And it's still here, present in our lives.

Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, part of which is tonight's Gospel, we are not to be pious in public. I am not sure how people fast during Lent these days, but the instruction for fasting is NOT to go around looking weak and hungry. In other words, in the practices of your daily life, do so to the glory of God.

The Sermon on the Mount also tells us to give alms, give our offerings, give to charities so only God sees your giving. Don't wave your ten dollar bills around as you put them in the offering. Give what you can, quietly and joyfully. And pray alone so only God hears your petitions. It is OK to pray together, but your personal prayers are to be done alone. In other words, don't boast in your faith practices. God knows every single thing we do, so there certainly is no need to pray loudly in the presence of others.

Jesus does not tell us not to be pious in public. What Jesus is actually saying is to be honest in your actions. Show humility. We are not to boast about our own piety. Our piety is to be an acknowledgement of all God has given and done for each of us.

The same is true when we do good works to serve others. Do not boast about the things you do to care for the lowly - for caring for those with needs are our responsibility as Christians.

Today, the crosses on our foreheads, whether from the imposition of ashes or from our baptisms are the mark that we are to love and serve. These ashes remind us of God's reconciling, merciful work through the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. Christ reaches into the depth of our lives and brings us into a right and proper relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the truth of the reality of Godly salvation. Remember what the cross of baptism means. And remember what the sign of the ashes means. We are accepted as God's daughters and sons, with the responsibility to love and serve those who need us most.

Something happened the other day while Scott and I were up at church recording for Sunday. I had taken out the words for our hymn number sign. Scott saw these words and ash was laying on top of Wednesday, and he asked me what wash day was in the church. Of course, we laughed at how the signs read, but "Wash Day" is certainly appropriate for today.

Because we have received the sign of the cross in baptism, we are made new, made clean by the water from the fount. However, we are also made clean by the death and

resurrection of Christ. He defeated sin once and for all. Yes, we have been washed and redeemed.

By the power of Jesus' cross, whether of water or ashes, we know grace. And we know grace because Jesus has taken our sins. This grace becomes our centering and our focus throughout Lent and every single day of our lives. Amen.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of one being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in
accordance with the Scriptures;

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
who had spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

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 those who are suffering with the COVID virus, Clifford Berkhus - LaVonne Black's cousin, Gayle Lee – friend of Connie Rawls, Tom Phillips - family of Scott and Pastor Carol Strand, Marilyn Dolezal, Jeanne Roen, Edna Mae Lewis, Judy - Curt Meyer's sister, Rose – Lenora Scheer's niece, Greg Turner, Fern Softing, and those we name in our hearts before you 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.**

Lenten Hymn

Be Thou My Vision

Text: Eleanor Hull

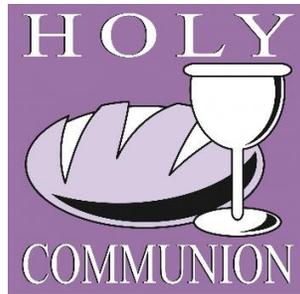
Music: Irish Traditional

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

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower
Raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and thou only, the first in my heart
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art

Light of my soul, after 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



Holy Communion

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us gift thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Lenten Preface

It is indeed our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that renewed in the font of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

(spoken together)

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,**

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna in the highest.

Words of Institution

On the night our Lord was betrayed, he took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper, our Lord took the cup gave thanks and blessed it and said to his disciples, "This cup is the new promise in my blood which is shed for you and for ALL people for the forgiveness of sins. When you drink from this cup, remember me, for I will not drink from it until I return."

The Lord's Prayer

As we have been gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the pray we have been taught.

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by 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. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

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

We eat and drink together

The body of our Lord given for you.
The blood of Christ shed for you.

Prayer after Communion

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.
Amen.

Sending

Blessing

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.
Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news.
Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Be Thou My Vision

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