

ASH
WEDNESDAY

All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

Ecclesiastes 3:20 (KJV)

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:5, 6 (KJV)

"The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mark 1:15 (NIV)

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the season of Lent. It marks the beginning of a special time of reflection on the true nature and cost of our sins and the great redeeming love God has for us. In the historic practice of the church, Ash Wednesday was a day for personal confession. The mood of the day was somber: no organ music was played, the chancel was covered in black, the people knelt to confess to Jesus, "It was my sin that brought this upon You." In imitation of an Old Testament practice, New Testament Christians received the sign of the cross on their forehead made with ashes—hence the name for the day.

Ashes have a two-fold significance. They are a sign of repentance before God; in humility, people filled with guilt over their sins would dress themselves in sackcloth and ashes. Ashes also serve as a solemn reminder that we are all mortal. Since a day is coming when our bodies, too, will return to dust and ashes, we come before God seeking His forgiveness and the promise of the resurrection to eternal life.

Today it starts. While customs change (we don't wear sackcloth, there are no ashes, the organ is not silent), on this day we still confess as Christians have throughout the centuries: "It was my sin that brought this upon You. Lord, have mercy." Repentance is an important part of our preparation to celebrate the Easter victory. Yes, the Lord has had mercy on us in Christ. Through the season of Lent, through emphasis on honest confession and renewal, may the Lord prepare us to worship our Risen Lord.

The quiet time before worship can be used for prayer and meditation. You might find the following helpful: the order of private confession on pp. 154-155 in the front of the hymnal, Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 130, or 143, and various Lenten Hymns (*Christian Worship* 98-129, 135-140).

RINGING OF THE BELLS

INVOCATION

We begin by recalling our baptism

P In the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit.

G Amen.

PSALM 51

Read Responsively

P Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;

G **according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.**

Wash away all my iniquity

and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,

and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,

so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth,

sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;

you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

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.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,

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 your salvation

and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,

and sinners will turn back to you.

Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me,

and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

P O Lord, open my lips,
G **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.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

In your good pleasure make Zion prosper;
build up the walls of Jerusalem.

Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight
you;

then bulls will be offered on your altar.

THE BEGINNING OF LENT

P Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God created us to know joy in communion with Him and to live in harmony with one another. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. But God in His mercy has sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take our place under the law, to suffer for us, and to die the death we deserve. Beginning tonight, and during the 40 days of Lent, with extra time for worship on Wednesdays, we fix our eyes on Jesus, who had no sin, yet was made sin for us so that in Him, we might become the righteousness of God.

Let us be silent. Let us be still. Let us pause now for a time of reflection on our sins and forgiveness through our Savior Jesus.

Silence for reflection

An ancient custom in the church was to kneel for the confession of sins as a sign of humility—how can a sinful man approach the presence of a holy God? Only with a repentant heart that looks not to itself but to Christ Jesus who has full atonement made. The Apostle Paul writes in the last chapter of Galatians: “May I never boast except in the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord.”

♪ **In hopelessness and near despair, I cry to You, my Savior!
My guilt is more than I can bear. I have not earned Your favor.
You know me as I really am: How much is truth, how much is sham;
Why should You heed my pleading? (CWS 738)**

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

P Most holy and merciful Father,

All **We confess to You and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault, by our own 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.

G **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

P We have been deaf to Your call to serve as Christ served us.
We have not been true to the mind of Christ.
We have grieved the Holy Spirit.

G **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

P We confess to You, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride and hypocrisy in our lives

G **We confess to You, O Lord.**

P Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our manipulation of other people

G **We confess to You, O Lord.**

P Our anger when our selfish aims are denied and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves

G **We confess to You, O Lord.**

P Our love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in daily life and work

G **We confess to You, O Lord.**

P Our negligence in worship and prayer and our failure to show the faith that is in us

G **We confess to You, O Lord.**

P Forgive us, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

G **Forgive us, O Lord.**

P For all that we think or say or do that is at variance with Your will,
C **Forgive us, O Lord.**

♪ **I see my heart's condition now, My heart's diverse affections.
Why do I love the things You loathe; I'm torn in two directions:
Now prodigal, now Pharisee. O God, be merciful to me;
Who else but You can help me? (CWS 738)**

P Restore us, good Lord, and let Your anger depart from us.
C **Hear us, Lord, for Your mercy is great.**

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 suffering of Your Son, O Lord,
C **Bring us with all Your saints to the joy of His resurrection.**

♪ **I tremble as I feel Your hand, Expecting retribution,
Yet hear no curse or reprimand, But grace and absolution:
With You there is forgiveness, Lord, You speak the sweet, consoling Word,
And I am sure You love me! (CWS 738)**

P Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. Upon this your confession, as a called servant of Christ and by His authority, I announce the grace of God unto all of us, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I speak what He tells Christians to speak in John 20: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son ☩ and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

♪ **Forgiven, free of guilt and shame, Grant me some time to render
A gift to glorify Your name, Love to reflect Your splendor:
This world must know what I have learned, That You bestow what none has
earned: The joy of full forgiveness! (CWS 738)**

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PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Almighty and everlasting God, who forgives the sins of the penitent, create in us new hearts, that we, lamenting of our sins, may obtain of You, the God of all mercy, perfect forgiveness through faith in the passion of Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

G Amen.

THE WORD

First Lesson: Joel 2:12-19

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. ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. ¹⁶ Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷ Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, “Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’ ” ¹⁸ Then the LORD will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people.

¹⁹ The LORD will reply to them: “I am sending you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations.

P The Word of our Lord!

St. Paul’s Adult Choir – “Lord Jesus, Think on Me” by Hal Hopson

Holy Gospel Luke 18:9-14

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

*The Son
of God*
**GOES
FORTH
TO WAR**



P The Gospel of our Lord!

G Praise be to You, O Christ.

Hymn of the Day CW 127 *"Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"* (stanzas 1-3)

♪ Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, See Him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected; Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He.
'Tis the long-expected Prophet, David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it: 'Tis the true and faithful Word.

♪ Tell me, as you hear Him groaning, Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning, Foes insulting His distress,
Many hands were raised to wound Him, None would intervene to save,
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him Was the stroke that justice gave.

♪ If you think of sin but lightly Nor suppose the evil great,
Here you see its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed; See who bears the awful load --
'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed, Son of Man and Son of God.

Sermon Theme: *“God, have mercy on me, a sinner”*

Hymn of the Day CW 127 *“Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” (stanza 4)*

♪ Here we have a firm foundation, Here the refuge of the lost;
Christ's the rock of our salvation, His the name of which we boast.
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded, Sacrifice to cancel guilt --
None shall ever be confounded Who on Him their hope have built.

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OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

P Holy and righteous God, as we begin again the solemn spiritual journey of Lent, we come before You in deep humility. We confess that we are sinners, both by the nature we inherit and by the sinful thoughts and desires, words, and actions that nature produces. Because of our sins, we deserve only Your wrath and punishment. Yet You reveal yourself, not only as a God of holiness and justice but as a God of mercy and love. Despairing of our own merits and worthiness, and in response to Your gracious invitation, we come pleading for Your forgiveness.

C **Lord, have mercy on us for Your holy name's sake.**

P You have revealed Your love and mercy for us sinners in Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior. You sent Him into our world to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of all people. Help us grasp by faith the great truth that the pain and suffering, the mockery and ridicule, and the death and punishment He endured should have been ours. Help us understand that in incomprehensible love He suffered and died for us.

C **Lord, have mercy on us for Jesus' sake.**

P God of grace and mercy, may Your Spirit continue to be with us as we follow the way of the cross. As we contemplate the story of our Savior's passion, build us up in our faith. Renew in us the zeal to serve You by reflecting Your love in our lives. Give us the desire and the ability to boldly proclaim the grace in which we stand, so that all for whom You lived and died may join us in fellowship now and in Your presence forever.

C We offer our humble thanks and praise, our prayers and petitions, and ourselves in body and spirit to You, Lord God. Hear us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

BLESSING

P Brothers and sisters, for the next forty days we turn our hearts to consider again the depths of Christ's suffering, that we might better know the height of His love. Enter these days with all sincerity, enter them with the hope of Easter, and enter them with God's blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you.

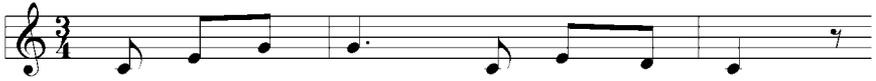
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

C Amen.



Look, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!
(John 1:29)



1 Your on - ly Son, no sin to hide,
2 Your gift of love they cru - ci - fied.
3 I was so lost; I should have died,



But you have sent him from your side
They laughed and scorned him as he died:
But you have brought me to your side

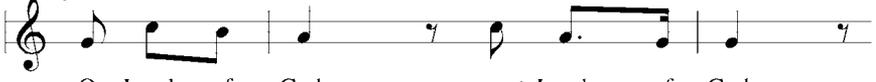


To walk up - on this guilt - y sod
The hum - ble King they named a fraud
To be led by your staff and rod



And to be - come the Lamb of God.
And sac - ri - ficed the Lamb of God.
And to be called a lamb of God.

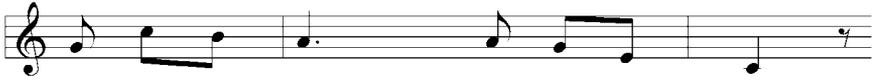
Refrain



O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God,



I love the ho - ly Lamb of God!



Oh, wash me in his pre - cious blood,



My Je - sus Christ, the Lamb of God.

*The Son
of God*
**GOES
FORTH
TO WAR**



LENTEN SCHEDULE

Supper 6:00-6:50PM

Worship at 7:00-7:50PM

*(Christ Lutheran in Beatrice has Lenten worship on
Thursday evenings at 7PM with no supper beforehand)*

Today – Ash Wednesday

March 4

March 11

March 18

March 25

April 1

April 9 – Maundy Thursday Worship in Beatrice – 7pm

April 10 – Good Friday – 8pm

April 12 – Easter Sunday!

Thank you for serving us this evening:

- † Ann Freese for using her God-given gifts in our service this evening,
- † Cari Schroeder and the Adult Choir for using their voices to glorify God and edify us,
- † and those who served tonight's Lenten supper.

If you would like more information about St. Paul's Lutheran Church, feel free to speak with Pastor Fred Berger after the service or anytime during the week!

Call/Text: 402-239-4509

Email: pastorberger@gmail.com

If you think you might be interested in joining the St. Paul's church family, Pastor would be more than happy to take you through some Bible studies at whatever time or location is most convenient for you to learn more about what we teach.

If you would like more information about St. Paul's Lutheran School, feel free to speak with Mr. Andrew Danner!

Call/Text: 402-433-5349

Email: danner@stpaulsplymouth.org

Mr. Danner would love to give you a tour of the school and answer any questions you might have about the excellent Christ-centered education we offer students of our church and community.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School

In an ever-changing world, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church exists to build Christ's kingdom in people's hearts with the un-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Christ's Love, Our Calling.