

Ash Wednesday

Worship Guide



+ Gathering +

Prelude

Be Thou My Vision – Zach Unke

Land Acknowledgement

Words of Welcome to the Synod Community

Silence for Reflection & Preparation

Preparation for Worship

Now Is The Time of Grace (Marty Haugen)

Refrain



Now is the time of grace, now is the day of sal -



va - tion. Turn now, and seek God's face,



now be-hold God's in - vi - ta - tion.

Greeting

B The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A **And also with you.**

Gathering Prayer

A **Let us pray,**
Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathe 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.

B Amen

First Reading - Psalm 51

- ¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- ²Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³For I know my offenses,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴Against 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.
- ⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- ⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.
- ⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.
- ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- ⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my wickedness.
- ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- ¹³Let me teach your ways to offenders,
and sinners shall be restored to you.
- ¹⁴Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- ¹⁶For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.
You are not pleased with burnt offering.
- ¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

Gospel Acclamation



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep - a - rate us from the love of God.



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep - a - rate us from the love of God.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

‘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.

‘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. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘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. 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.

‘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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 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.

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Sermon

Bishop

Hymn of the Day

326 – Bless Now, O God, The Journey



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

B 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 sin 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, into the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. As we continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection, let us confess our sin in the presence of God...and of one another.

Confession of Sin

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

Silence for Reflection

B Most holy and merciful God,

A **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.**

B 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.

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

B 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 your Holy Spirit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Imposition of Ashes

B Almighty God, you have created us out of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life.

A **Amen.**

B At this time, I would invite all those gathered with us from across the Synod to make a sign of the cross on your own forehead using ashes, water, or just your finger.

As we do so, may we remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return.

#186 - Create In Me A Clean Heart

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 to me the joy of
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

B Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

A **That we may show forth your glory in the world.**

B By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,

A **Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

B Almighty 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.

A **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession

B Trusting in God's righteousness, let us pray for the world and for our needs.

**A For the church, that in this season of fasting and repentance
the people of God, with sincere hearts,
may be renewed in their passion to live the gospel.**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

**A For all rostered leaders, lay leaders, and teachers
that they may lead the church by humble example
and give bold and faithful witness.**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

**A For peace among the nations
for times of transition
that those who have been called to lead, may do so with integrity.**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

**A For the Eastern Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
and for the whole Body of Christ
that we may become expressions of hospitality and care.**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

**A For the poor, the oppressed, the silenced, the grieving, the COVID-weary
that they may find deliverance from their distress,
and for those who seek to alleviate human suffering.**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

**A For those who suffer illness of mind or body
for those whose lives have been ravaged during this pandemic
for those who heal, comfort, assure, and serve
that they may be healed, and know the joy of abundant life.**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

**A For those who and live and served in your name
and who now rest from their earthly labours.
For the saints who have been gathered into your eternal embrace
over the course of the past 12 months**

B Holy God, hear our prayer

B Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew our whole Synod – our whole church – in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

A Amen

Lord's Prayer

B & A 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.

+ Sending +

Blessing

B May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth
and claimed us as Children of the light,
strengthen you on your journey into life renewed.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

A Amen

Sending Song

793 - Be Thou My Vision



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!



thou my best thought both by day and by night,
Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Dismissal

- A **Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;
be of good courage;
hold fast to that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour all people;
love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- B Thanks be to God! Amen!

Postlude

Savior, When In Dust To You – Gerald Near

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Ash Wednesday Sermon

Bishop Michael Pryse



Psychologists tell us that in order to be healthy people we need to be able to mourn. It is healthy to give voice to our grief. It is healthy to acknowledge the frailty of our human condition. This is not news for Christians. In the beatitudes Jesus tells us that those who mourn are blessed. We know that it is good for us to collectively acknowledge not just the happy things of life, but also the sad. We know that it is healthy for us to mourn together; to acknowledge, as one, that things are not as we would wish them to be and not as God intends them to be.

Each fall I am thankful that we have a national day of thanksgiving wherein the general public is given the opportunity to officially acknowledge our need to offer thanks to God. I often think that we could use more such secular holidays! Perhaps it would be wise to institute another national holy-day, in this case, an official day for repentance and mourning.

In the state of Israel, they publicly observe the Jewish holy day Yom Kippur. Those who have experienced an Israeli Yom Kippur tell me that a mystical silence settles over the whole nation. Everything stops. Everything is disrupted as the nation engages in a collective act of repentance and mourning that acknowledges all the injustice, hurt and violence that we share as a people, both corporately and individually.

The church's liturgical calendar provides us with similar points of reference. Our lives, too, are ordered by the cycles of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, Lent and Holy Week, Easter through Pentecost, and then by the long weeks of Ordinary Time. It's a wonderful gift that provides us with a special lens through which we experience the rhythms and movements of what constitutes the stuff of our everyday lives, even in the midst of pandemic days where every day seems like yet another "blursday."

In her book *Things Seen and Unseen*, Nora Gallagher speaks of "living by a calendar that runs parallel to my Day-Timer: a counterweight, one time set against another. The church calendar calls into consciousness the existence of a world uninhabited by efficiency, a world filled with the excessiveness of saints, ashes, smoke, and fire; it fills my heart with both dread and hope. It tells of journeys and mysteries, things 'seen and unseen,' the world of the almost known.

Ash Wednesday is a day of "grieving for a purpose" – a day of ritualized mourning that has a discernable and clear end in sight. Today we grieve for the sake of healing. We mourn for the sake of cleansing. As we heard in the great penitential Psalm 51 that we heard just moments ago, we plead to be "washed and made clean."

As a young pastor in rural Ontario, I was surprised when a parishioner taught me that ashes are used in the making of soap. Ashes, the church's preferred symbol of lament and mourning, can at the same time be seen as a symbol of cleansing! The cross of ashes on Ash Wednesday symbolizes both these actions.

In the sign of the cross, we recall the gift of baptism and how through its waters we have died to sin and then risen to new life in Christ. We recall both two actions; dying and rising and by wearing ashes, we ritually step towards new life!

On Ash Wednesday we come face to face with the harsh fact of our own mortality. The trumpet calls and we are marked with the mantle of ashes; an ancient sign of sorrow. The pastor intones the harsh reminder. "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." With sober urgency we are called to return to God. We begin our paschal pilgrimage – a pilgrimage that in many ways feels that we've been on for almost a year - and are summoned anew to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

It is a heavy day. It is a dark day - definitely not a party day! But don't think for a moment that days like this don't hold special gifts. Pray and watch! Who knows what miracles of life might rise from these ashes!