

March 5, 2014

Ash Wednesday



BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MALMO

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Holy Communion

INTRODUCTION

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. As we hear in today's readings, now is the acceptable time to return to the Lord. During Lent the people of God will reflect on the meaning of their baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty. What seems like an ending is really an invitation to make each day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God's mercy and forgiveness. With the cross on our brow, we long for the spiritual renewal that flows from the springtime Easter feast to come.

OPENING HYMN: “In the Cross of Christ I Glory” # 324 ELW

GREETING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy full pardon and forgiveness through 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 READING:

2 Corinthians 5:20b 6:10

The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.

Chapter 5

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Chapter 6

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For 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! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see — we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

PSALM: Psalm 51:1–17

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. (Ps. 51:1)

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

**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.**

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

**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. R**

Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my mother's womb.

**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

**Let me hear joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken may rejoice. R**

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

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.**

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. (Ps. 51:1)

Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. R**

Let me teach your ways to offenders,
and sinners shall be restored to you.

**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

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

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise. R

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.

"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

HYMN: **"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross"** **# 335 ELW**

OFFERING AND OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO LENT

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 our sinful rebellion 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, to 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. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSIO N OF SIN

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

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 your 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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Returning to the Lord with all our heart, let us pray for the whole people of God, the earth, and all who cry out for healing.

A time for silent prayer.

For Christians around the world assembled at the beginning of the Lenten fast; for greater understanding among the religions of the world; and for faith to recognize Christ as life's true treasure. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For faithful leaders who call us to compassion for the poor; and for all facing affliction, imprisonment, unemployment, hunger, and sleepless nights. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For the well-being of all creation; for earth's ecosystems; for plants and animals; and for rocks and soil. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For the health of our communities; for an end to injustice, oppression, poverty, and homelessness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For this assembly; for a deeper awareness of our mortality; and for all who live with illness, addiction, loss, or anxiety (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be made.

Reconcile us to one another and to you, gracious God, until we join all your holy ones in life everlasting. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Hear us according to your steadfast love, O God, and in your great compassion bring us to resurrection and rebirth in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, 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 gift 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:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

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.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.

Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.

Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.

Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness to the land of milk and honey.

Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.

Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.

Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God of resurrection and new life: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.

Breathe new life into us. Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit.

With your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

COMMUNION

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us 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 Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

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; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN: “God Be with You Till We Meet Again” # 536 ELW

Smeared in Sin, Washed in Love

We begin this Lenten season with confession; we begin with Psalm 51; we begin on our knees. Today this ancient prayer placed on our lips becomes new again: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." We speak our truths from the shadow of our sin, the very shadow that marks our mortality. Like ash traced upon our foreheads, we are marked with the reality of our frailties and failings. It is a stark reminder that sin and death are smeared all over us. From this inevitable reality, we cry out for mercy! For as bold as it is to name our sin and sinful ways that lead to death, it is all the more audacious to summon our God! To summon the one who actually has the power to do something about sin and the ways of death! On this day of penitence, through the work and witness of Christ Jesus, we brashly summon God to come, to hear our prayer, and to listen to our confession.

So, with our truths laid bare, we confess our unfaithfulness to God, our lackluster love for our neighbors, our neglect of suffering and injustice in the world. In the same breath, we ask God to wash us, to purge us, and to create in us clean hearts. The smears of sin are washed clean through the love of Christ. And yet, we will leave worship this day still carrying the cross-shaped trace of sin and death upon us. It is a reminder that, even amid our confession, we continue this Lenten season to listen for the perpetual call to return to the Lord our God who is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love (Joel 2:13).

The 2014 Lenten Devotions from the
Lutheran Indian Ministries is available in the entry.
It is entitled, "Look Upon Us As His".