

Ash Wednesday
February 22, 2023

Prelude and Chimes

Greeting

Let us look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was awaiting endured the cross

***Call to Worship** (*"The Holy In the Ordinary" by Ann Weems*)

Leader: Holy is the time and holy is this place,
and there are holy things that must be said.

**People: Let us say to one another what our souls whisper . . .
O Holy One, cast your tent among us;
come into our ordinary lives
and bless the living!**

Leader: Forty days stretch before us,
forty days of hungering after faithfulness,
forty days of trying to understand the story,
and then, Holy Week . . .
O God, if every week were holy . . .

**People: These forty days stretch before us,
and those of us who believe
yearn to feel Your presence,
yearn to be Your people;
and yet, the days fill with ordinary things
with no time left for seeking the holy.**

Leader: Spiritual contemplation is all right
for those who have the time,
but most of us have to make a living.

**People: Most of us have to live in the real world
where profanity splashes
and blots out anything holy.**

Leader: Where, O Holy One, can we find You in this unholy mess?

**People: How, O God, can we find
the holy in the ordinary?**

***Hymn #205:** "Forty Days and Forty Nights"

***Confession and Absolution**

Leader: As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, study, and works of love help us return to that love. I invite you, therefore, to commit yourselves to love God and neighbor by confessing your sin and by asking God for strength to persevere in your Lenten discipline.

Leader: King David sinned against the Lord, committing adultery and murder. When he was confronted by the prophet Nathan, the king repented of his sins. In the Spirit-inspired words of a psalm, David expressed his sorrow over his sins and his trust in God's mercy: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." God, in his grace, forgave the repentant king. As we begin our Lenten journey on this Ash Wednesday, we repent of our sins and, using the words of David's psalm, we seek God's amazing grace and him to have mercy on us.

People: "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 every before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Leader: Just as he did in the life of his servant David, God has showered us with his grace, his undeserved favor for sinners. God sent his Son into the world to be our Savior. On the cross Jesus took onto himself the penalty of death that we deserved for our sins and now those sins are washed away in his blood. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Prayer

Almighty God, you showed grace and mercy to your servant David, granting him forgiveness. According to your perfect plan, David the king became an ancestor of a greater King, the Savior, called the Son of David, Jesus the Messiah. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we too know and experience your amazing grace. During this season of Lent, lead us to true repentance and renew your Spirit within us that we might serve you by sharing your love with others and living as witnesses to Jesus' love. Hear our prayer in Jesus' name.

The Imposition of Ashes

In repentant humility, the Old Testament figure Job said, “I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes”. In ancient times, God’s people often demonstrated sorrow for their sins by putting dust and ashes on their heads. Today on Ash Wednesday, as we begin our journey to the cross with Jesus, we remember that we are sinners and that we need a Savior. We receive a mark of ashes in the sign of a cross.

Consecration Prayer for the Ashes

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life. Amen.

All who wish are invited to come forward and receive the mark of ashes.

Special Music – “Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)” – Carol Bellamy

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-12

Reflection

***Hymn #197:** “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross”

*Benediction

*Postlude