

A SERVICE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Ash Wednesday Service

February 26, 2020

GATHERING

PRELUDE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God sent Christ into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

People: God's love endures forever.

Leader: God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

People: God's love endures forever.

OPENING PRAYER

WORD

SCRIPTURE READING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-14

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-21

SERMON

INVITATION TO OBSERVE LENT

PSALM 51

LITANY OF PENITENCE

People: Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

Leader: 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.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Leader: We have not listened 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.

People: Have mercy on us, O God.

Leader: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness: The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

People: we confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people,

People: we confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

People: we confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

People: we confess to you, O God.

Leader: Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

People: we confess to you, O God.

Leader: Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need

and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

People: **accept our repentance, O God.**

Leader: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

People: **accept our repentance, O God.**

Leader: For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

People: **accept our repentance, O God.**

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

People: **Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

People are invited to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes.

OFFERING OURSELVES TO GOD

During this time, you are invited to consider the Lenten discipline you will undergo and make it an offering to God. Lenten Bible study, morning and/or evening prayer each day, a service project, daily Bible readings, fasting, etc. The point is to make room for God to move in our lives.

SENDING HYMN

insert

“Just as I Am, without One Plea”

BLESSING THE DUST

***Those who are able, please stand**

Citations: Moyers, Mike. Ash, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.; Blessing the Dust, Jan Richardson from Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons



Ash, by artist Mike Moyers

442 Just as I Am, without One Plea

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea but that thy
 2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - ya
 3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come,
 4 Just as I am, thy love un-known has bro - ken

blood was shed for me, and that thou biddest me
 con - flict, man - ya doubt, fight - ings and fears with -
 par - don, cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise
 ev - ery bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea,

come to thee,
 in, with - out,
 I be - lieve, O Lamb of God, I come; I come!
 thine a - lone,

SPANISH

1 *Tal como soy de pecador,
 sin más confianza que tu amor;
 a tu llamada vengo a ti,
 ¡Cordero de Dios, heme aquí!*

KOREAN

1 큰-죄에 파-진날위해
 주보-혈흘려주시고
 또-나를오-라하시니-
 주께로거-저갑니다

When illness limited her involvement in a bustling household, the author wrote this hymn that helped her both to achieve and to express a renewed sense of worth grounded in Christ's self-giving. Its simple, direct, and deeply felt language has made it a source of comfort to many.

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Examine your Heart



Meu Coracao, My Heart

“Create in me a clean heart oh God, and put a new and right spirit within me.” Sometimes we must empty and clean out all of the mire out of our hearts and lives for God’s renewal. We must muster the courage to take an honest look at our own hearts. Much like the tree our hearts are misshapen, rough, and sometimes hollow. One’s spirit can be bruised and broken cause by external forces and internal choices. Yet like our own hearts, the misshapeness of the tree yields to openness; there is still beauty in the rough edges; in the hollow shadows God’s light penetrates and shines through.

Like the tiny light in the hollow of this tree, God reminds us that even in our hollow places there is “God-residue” left. There is always enough left in order to give God praise. There is enough light to be fully restored into joy. The God-residue or light that resides within us reminds us of God’s faithfulness, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and unfailing love. It is when we have cleaned up and cleaned out our hearts that we are able to connect with the light of God that dwells within us.” -- Olusola Tribble

FOR SELF-EXAMINATION AND PERSONAL REFLECTION DURING LENT

Friends in Christ, every year before the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community. We thus begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are invited to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God.

People are invited to prayerfully and honestly examine themselves:

- Am I, by consistent attendance at worship, a witness to others of the worthiness of the God I follow? Or am I, by my sporadic attendance, suggesting that God is worth serving sometimes, but not others?
- How has my sense of interconnectedness in corporate worship grown of late, and how can I move ahead in appreciating the needs and contributions of others in the congregation?
- What progress am I making in sharing gladly what I have with others, particularly the stranger and poor?
- What attitudes do I convey to those who irritate me? How can awareness of my own need of God’s grace enable me to be more gracious to them?
- Am I as charitable and thoughtful to family members as to others? Or do I “take it out” on my family when life gets hectic?
- When I hear someone being unjustly maligned, do I speak up to correct the record, or am I a silent accomplice?
- How can I more effectively and consistently support programs and legislation that help the disadvantaged?

-In devotional acts of prayer and reading, am I increasing my attention span and discovering new ways of listening rather than talking, or giving thanks rather than complaining?

-In addition to intercessory prayer, what habits can I develop that allow me to be more responsive to the sick, the distressed, the bereaved, particularly when their needs require immediate action? Can I make space in my life to allow for unanticipated opportunities to minister to others?

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR LORD

- Pride, self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, hard-heartedness
- Worship: more performance than true devotion
- Controlled by fear and anxiety rather than by faith
- Holding back our money in fear of not having enough in the future
- Too little time spent one-on-one with my Lord
- Neglect of prayer, the Word, spiritual direction
- Idolatry—gaining meaning from things instead of from God
- Hypocrisy, inauthenticity
- Joyless labor in God's house instead of joyful work by God's side
- Allowing the world to change us instead of our changing the world
- Not giving God first consideration in all decisions
- Slowness to acknowledge and confess my sins...

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

- Lack of love for each other; little true connection between us; Demanding total agreement; allowing others to be demonized for holding different opinions
- Judgmental spirit, lack of grace, rigidity, being overly demanding
- Talking more than listening
- Gossiping
- Complaining
- Not taking in what the other is saying and weighing it in Holy Spirit and instead reacting immediately against it
- Leaders not bringing prophetic challenges to people ...

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

- Lack of sacrificial service to the poor and oppressed
- Separating ourselves from the world so that we don't see social problems that keep people oppressed and captive
- Weak engagement with those who set social policies
- Lack of passion for those who don't know Jesus; failure to build bridges of relationships through service
- Failure to call others to live in accord with God's sovereign rule as characterized by love and justice and shalom for all
- Lack of vision for the church in our city/region
- Weakness in intercessory prayer for others and our ministries
- Lack of equal respect for all cultures, and between each
- Consumer mentality, allowing our possessions to own us instead of investing in Kingdom work

Laziness—“Let someone else do it.”

- Failure to live as good stewards of the earth and all God has provided for us to share with one another
- Acceptance of and acquiescence to social sins that enslave and hurt others—pornography, slave labor practices, domestic violence, genocide, war, limiting access to food, housing, healthcare, etc.
- Refusing to blow the whistle on social and personal sin so that others may know God’s love for all ...

Pride—putting self in the place of god as the center and objective of our life. Pride is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures, dependent upon God.

Irreverence—deliberate neglect of God’s worship, or contentment with a perfunctory participation in it. Manifest as cynicism toward the holy or as use of Christianity for personal advantage

Sentimentality—satisfaction with pious feelings and beautiful ceremony without striving for personal holiness

Distrust—refusal to recognize God’s wisdom and love. Undue worry, anxiety, scrupulosity, or perfectionism. Attempts to gain or keep control of our life in various ways

Disobedience—rejection of God’s known will. The refusal to learn God’s nature through scripture. Breaking confidence by irresponsibility, treachery, and unnecessary disappointment of others. Breaking legal or moral contracts.

Impenitence—Refusal to search out and face up to our sins, or to confess them before God. Self-justification by believing our sins to be insignificant, natural, or inevitable; by refusing to apologize; by being unwilling to forgive ourselves.

Vanity—Failure to credit God and others for their part in our lives. Boasting, exaggeration, ostentatious behavior, undue concern over “things”

Arrogance—Being overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, obstinate

Resentment—Rejection of talents, abilities, or opportunities God and others give us.

Rebellion, hatred of God or human beings. Cynicism.

Envy—Dissatisfaction with our place in God’s order of creation. Manifests itself in jealousy, malice, and contempt for others or others’ things

Covetousness—the refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures, expressed in the accumulation of material things to prove self-worth, the use of others to personal advantage, or in the quest for status and power at the expense of others

Avarice—manifested in inordinate ambition or domination of others. The waste of natural resources or personal possessions. Extravagance or living beyond our means. Manifest in undue protection of our things. Stinginess, which can deprive others of life and thus kill them.

Gluttony—overindulgence of natural appetites for food and drink, and by inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort.

Manifest in intemperance and lack of discipline

Lust—misuse of sex through seeing others as objects for our own pleasure without regard for their desires. Includes unchastity, immodesty, adultery, prudery.

Sloth—the refusal to respond to opportunities for growth, service, or sacrifice. Laziness in spiritual, mental, or physical duties. Neglect of family. Indifference to injustice or the world’s suffering. Neglecting the outcast or person in need.

Questions drawn from resources for Lent, PC(USA) and L. Stookey (adapted).

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