

Ash
Wednesday



Ashes to ashes...

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
"A Church for Families, a Family for Everyone"
Ash Wednesday ~ March 2, 2022

ASH WEDNESDAY

MARCH 2, 2022

Welcome to all who are attending our service today. We are glad you are with us! To all guests and visitors, we especially extend our hands of friendship. May God bless the worship time for each one of you. Please come again!

Holy Communion is celebrated at the 8:30 service on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, and at the 11:00 service on the 2nd and 4th Sundays.

Why Ashes?

Why ashes? On Ash Wednesday, many congregations practice the imposition of ashes. But why? The imposition of ashes can be a powerful, tactile reminder of both Law and Gospel in which worshipers of any age can take part. Many times, the words “dust you are, and to dust you shall return” are spoken as ashes are received on the forehead. These words remind us that as a result of sin and the fall, death is a reality. Ashes also call to mind the practice in Scripture of wearing sackcloth and ashes as a sign of sorrow and repentance of sin. Typically, however, the ashes are marked in the shape of the cross, pointing us to the promise of forgiveness of sin through Jesus’ crucifixion for us. After leaving worship, we will each eventually wash off the ashen cross. As we splash water on our foreheads, we remember our Baptism, where we were cleansed of sin through water and the Word. Whether literally marked with ashes or not, we all enter this penitential season of Lent praying that God Almighty would have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

(**P** = Pastor, **C** = Congregation, **A** = Reader/Assisting)

‡ PREPARATION ‡

**THEME: Heart to Heart:
“Sackcloth and Ashes to Robes of Righteousness”**

AS WE GATHER: Sackcloth and ashes—the signs of mourning and repentance in the pages of Scripture. Today, we begin our Lenten journey. Today, we begin our return from exile. This is not a journey that begins with rejoicing and excitement; it begins with ashes. Our Lenten journey begins with ashes on our foreheads, a sign of broken and repentant hearts. God does not desire our sacrifices, as if we could atone for or cover our own sin. God desires broken and contrite hearts which He will not despise (Psalm 51:17). Any efforts to cover up, to pay for, or to atone for our own sin only result in more sackcloth and ashes, even death. It is God who responds to the ashes of our repentance by sending His only-begotten Son. Jesus Christ, on the cross, has washed our foreheads of the ashes of our sins, has removed the sackcloth of our guilt, and has clothed us in His robes of righteousness and garments of salvation. The pure and holy white linen garments that adorn the saints in heaven cover us as we long for the day when we will join them around the throne.

PRELUDE

“Return To The Lord”

(based on Joel 2:13)

Kenneth T. Kosche (ASCAP)

Ascension Choir

Return , return, return to the Lord your God.

Return , return, return to the Lord your God.

The Lord is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love,

And abounding in steadfast love;

The Lord is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love,

And abounding in steadfast love, and abounding in steadfast love;

Return, return, return, return, return, return, return, return,

Return, to the Lord your God.

HYMN

“Lord Jesus, Think on Me”

Lord Jesus, think on me
And purge away my sin;
From selfish passions set me free
And make me pure within.

Lord Jesus, think on me,
By anxious thoughts oppressed;
Let me Your loving servant be
And taste Your promised rest.

Lord Jesus, think on me
Nor let me go astray;
Through darkness and perplexity
Point out Your chosen way.

Lord Jesus, think on me
That, when the flood is past,
I may th' eternal brightness see
And share Your joy at last.

INVOCATION

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

C Amen.

ADDRESS

P Historically, the forty days of Lent were a time for catechumens to be instructed in the Christian faith. It was a journey of faith, culminating in their being baptized during the Easter Vigil and then participating in the Lord's Supper for the first time. This year, our Lenten spiritual journey begins with the exile in the wilderness of sin and death. But do not be surprised to discover that from the very beginning, even here, as if just outside the gates of the Garden of Eden, it is Christ who travels with us. We enter this Lenten season contemplating the reality of our earthly journey but with eyes fixed on the destination—the empty tomb and the open gates of everlasting life. What joy there is in knowing that we do not walk alone!

OPENING SENTENCES

P We are children of Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the Garden of Eden for eating the forbidden fruit. When the Lord God came looking for them, they hid, because, as Adam said,

C **“I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”**
Gen. 3:10

P Although life would be hard for all people, God told the serpent about a descendant of Eve, that

C **“He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”** *Gen. 3:15*

P Moreover, before He barred them from the Tree of Life, God already showed them mercy and

C **the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.** *Gen. 3:21*

P Confident that when our Lord Jesus rose on Easter, He crushed Satan as He conquered sin, death, and everlasting condemnation, let us hear in faith God’s call to repent as we begin our journey from exile.

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Joel 2:12–19

(Now is the time to return.)

P “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.”

Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster. Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people.

Men: **Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders;**

Women: ***gather the children, even nursing infants.***

Men: Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

Women: *Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say,*

P “Spare Your people, O Lord, and make not Your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”
Then the Lord became jealous for His land and had pity on His people. The Lord answered and said to His people, “Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.”

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CONFESSION (*kneel or sit*)

P Our gracious God has sent us more than physical food. He has sent His Word in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. Because for His sake God offers us full and free pardon, let us confess our sins.

(Silence to reflect upon and confess our sins)

Most merciful God,
C **we confess that by ourselves we deserve to be exiled from Your gracious presence. We are by nature sinful and unclean, and we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. In Your grace and mercy, forgive us and accompany us in our journey to the Paradise You have promised because of the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

(sit)

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Worshipers who desire to receive ashes come forward at this time and stand before the pastor. The pastor applies the ashes in the shape of the cross to the forehead or hand while saying to each person, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

“Chief of Sinners Though I Be”

Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me,
Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might never die.
As the branch is to the vine, I am His, and He is mine.

Oh, the height of Jesus' love, Higher than the heav'ns above,
Deeper than the depths of sea, Lasting as eternity!
Love that found me—wondrous thought!
Found me when I sought Him not.

Only Jesus can impart Balm to heal the wounded heart,
Peace that flows from sin forgiv'n,
Joy that lifts the soul to heav'n, Faith and hope to walk with God
In the way that Enoch trod.

Chief of sinners though I be, Christ is all in all to me;
All my wants to Him are known, All my sorrows are His own.
He sustains the hidden life Safe with Him from earthly strife.

O my Savior, help afford By Your Spirit and Your Word!
When my wayward heart would stray, Keep me in the narrow way;
Grace in time of need supply While I live and when I die.

(stand)

ABSOLUTION

P In the Garden of Eden, our gracious God covered our naked, sinful parents with garments of skins. But in the Paradise promised to us, we shall be clothed with white robes of Christ's own righteousness. Even now, as His baptized children, our heavenly Father looks on us with our sins washed away. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

SALUTATION

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P** Let us pray.
Lord Jesus, our first parents were barred from the Tree of Life and from Eden itself, but You have opened heaven's gate to us, where Paradise awaits. Grant us faith each day to follow where You have led the way, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

PEACE OF THE LORD

- P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.
- C** And also with you.

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Revelation 7:9–14 (ESV)

(The saints wear white robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb.)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

- P** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

(Jesus teaches us to reflect our heavenly home now while we live here, and He assures us that our heavenly Father is with us even in secret moments.)

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter.
C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹ [Jesus said:] “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ² “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when 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... ¹⁶ “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.
C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

HYMN

“Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain”

(tune: Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed)

Come to Calv’ry’s holy mountain,
Sinners, ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain
Flows for you, for me, for all,
In a full, perpetual tide,
Opened when our Savior died.

Come in poverty and meanness,
Come defiled, without, within;
From infection and uncleanness,
From the leprosy of sin,
Wash your robes and make them white;
You shall walk with God in light.

Come in sorrow and contrition,
Wounded, paralyzed, and blind;
Here the guilty, free remission,
Here the troubled, peace may find.
Health this fountain will restore;
They that drink shall thirst no more.

They that drink shall live forever;
‘Tis a soul-renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never
Break his covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died,
Sealed when he was glorified.

SERMON

Pastor Jim Sprengle

“ROBES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Joel 2:12–19 and Revelation 7:9-14

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made; Who for us and for our salvation came down from Heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

MUSICAL OFFERING

“Create In Me A Clean Heart, O God”

(based on Psalm 51:10-15)

Carl F. Mueller/arr. Dick Averre

Ascension Choir (7:00pm)

*Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence;
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation,
Unto me of Thy salvation,*

*Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;
And uphold me, uphold me
With Thy free spirit, Thy free spirit.
Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto Thee.
Create in me a clean heart, O God!*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

- P** We are returning from exile, listening to the inviting Word of God, full of grace and truth. Let us respond to Him in prayer.
- Gracious God, offering full and free forgiveness, we come in spiritual sackcloth and ashes, painfully aware of our sins and failings. Graciously wash us and clothe us with the robe of Christ's own righteousness,
- C** **so that we may live eternally with all Your saints.**
- P** Eden's Lord and ours, hear us and all who call out to You in pain and sorrow, sweat or tears. Remind us of Your painful victory over every temptation,
- C** **and strengthen us to follow where You have led the way.**
- P** Loving Father, calling us to Mount Calvary, remove from us our fear of Your righteous judgment for our sins; strengthen our faith
- C** **in the all-availing sacrifice of Your Son in our stead.**
- P** Spirit of life, remind us again of our Baptism, in which our old Adam was drowned; strengthen us
- C** **to live in the freedom of the children of God.**
- P** Lord Jesus, Savior and Guide, give us the eyes of faith to see the tree of life awaiting us in heaven, and guide us
- C** **to follow where You have led the way.**
- P** Protecting Father, assure us of Your presence on our journey through the desert of this world and bring us at last
- C** **to the paradise purchased by Your Son.**
- P** O Holy Spirit, nourish our faith and restore our souls each time we come to the Table of the Lord and receive His body and blood,
- C** **a foretaste of the feast to come.**
- P** Holy and merciful Lord over all, we feel the burden of our sin; renew in us the firm faith that Your Son has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,
- C** **giving His life for ours.**

- P** Everlasting Father, our Savior has conquered death. Fill us with rejoicing, confident that we shall therefore gather around the eternal throne of the Lamb, Your Son, who with You and the Holy Spirit are one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

- P** Lord, remember us in Your kingdom, and teach us to pray:
- C** **Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

- P** The blessing of almighty God—the Father, who saw mankind's hopeless condition, the ✠ Son, who showed the depth of God's love, and the Holy Spirit, who has opened our eyes of faith in Christ—be upon you now and forever.
- C** Amen.

ADDRESS

- P** We have come to Lent again, these forty days in which to prepare for Easter, this period for introspection and contrition. It is a time given to us to struggle against all that would distract us from seeing the sacrifice of Christ in our place, the Good News that He has paid for all our sins once and for all. But through our hearing of the Gospel, we have been strengthened for the task. Indeed, in terms of seeing our Savior by faith, we can be sure that by His grace, though we once were blind, now we see. Let us confidently sing "Amazing Grace."

HYMN

“Amazing Grace”

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.

Thro’ many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come.
‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise,
Than when we first begun.

DISMISSAL

P Go in God’s amazing grace and peace in this Lenten journey.
C Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Ascension Lutheran Church

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Web Site: www.alcportland.org

Church Office Hours: Monday–Friday 9am to 3pm

Our Mission Statement:

~Go and Share Jesus Christ~

Our Vision Statement:

“Take part...Join Jesus on His mission”

The members of Ascension Lutheran Church are committed to being God ‘s witnesses in Gresham, and in all of Portland and the Northwest, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8):

With the universal Christian Church, we believe, teach and respond to the love of the Triune God— the Father, Creator of all that exists; the Son Jesus Christ, Who left His home in Heaven to become flesh and blood, to suffer and die for the sins of all peoples of the world, and Who rose from the grave, victorious over sin, death and the devil, that we too might live with Him in Heaven; and the Holy Spirit, Who creates faith in our hearts in Christ Jesus through God ‘s Word and Sacrament. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are one God, co-equal and co-eternal. The core teachings of our faith from the Lutheran perspective can be summarized in three short phrases: Grace alone, Scripture alone, Faith alone.

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