



February 17, 2021
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ASH WEDNESDAY

A CALL TO RETURN

Through the words of the prophet Joel, God called to His people and commanded that they turn from their sinful ways and return to Him for His grace and blessings. The images the prophet uses are vivid and disturbing. The situation of God's people is desperate and needs immediate attention. This is a time for listening and responding to the call to return to faithfulness to the God who has ever been faithful to His people. "Return to the Lord, your God" is more than a verse sung as part of the liturgy. It is a heartfelt directive for our lives as together we follow the pathway of Lent.

ASH WEDNESDAY ADDRESS

Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the Church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope.

Let us pray that our dear Father in heaven, for the sake of His

beloved Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit, might richly bless this Lententide for us so that we may come to Easter with glad hearts and keep the feast in sincerity and truth.

LITANY

Return to the LORD your God,
**for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and
abounding in steadfast love.**

From seeking after other gods,
we return to You, O Lord.

From misusing Your name,
we return to You, O Lord.

From forgetting to call upon You in every trouble and from
faltering in prayer,
we return to You, O Lord.

From faltering in worship and not always hearing and learning
Your Word gladly,
we return to You, O Lord.

From disrespecting the authorities You have placed in our
lives,
we return to You, O Lord.

From disregard for our neighbor's well-being,
we return to You, O Lord.

From failing to nurture the most important relationships in our lives,
we return to You, O Lord.

From our lack of complete honesty toward one another and our failure to help our neighbors improve their possession and income,
we return to You, O Lord.

From speaking hurtful words about others and failing to explain our neighbors' actions in the kindest way,
we return to You, O Lord.

From covetous thoughts and actions,
we return to You, O Lord.

To Your gracious Word of love for us in Christ,
we return.

To our identity as children of God, baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
we return.

To Christ's body and blood, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins,

we return.

Return to the LORD your God,
**for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and
 abounding in steadfast love.**

Steadfast Lord, You remain a solid foundational rock, even when we are shaky and weak. We thank and praise You for Your gracious invitation to return to You, not only during this Lenten season, but day by day. We are prone to wander. Yet Your love for us never wavers, and You constantly call us to return to You. Bless our Lenten journey. Let it be for us a time of daily returning to You, that we may be Your own and live under You in Your kingdom and serve You in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

+ THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES +

The imposition of ashes are purely optional. This is a tradition, it is not required for a Christian to begin the season of Lent. When you come forward make sure you move any hair away from your forehead so that the ashes may be better applied. Once you have received the ashes you may return to your seat in silent contemplation.

+ Confession and Absolution +

HYMN OF INVOCATION “Lord Jesus, Think on Me” (*LSB* 610)

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You 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; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those

who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

+ SERVICE OF THE WORD +

PSALM

Psalm 51:1–13

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to Your | steadfast love; *
according to Your abundant mercy
blot out my trans- | gressions.
- ² Wash me thoroughly from my in- | iquity, *
and cleanse me | from my sin!
- ³ For I know my trans- | gressions, *
and my sin is ever be- | fore me.
- ⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned
and done what is evil | in Your sight, *
so that You may be justified in Your words
and blameless in Your | judgment.
- ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in in- | iquity, *
and in sin did my mother con- | ceive me.
- ⁶ Behold, You delight in truth in the inward | being, *
and You teach me wisdom in the | secret heart.
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I | shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whit- | er than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and | gladness; *
let the bones that You have bro- | ken rejoice.

- ⁹ Hide Your face | from my sins,*
and blot out all my in- | iquities.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, | O God,*
and renew a right spirit with- | in me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away from Your | presence,*
and take not Your Holy Spirit | from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your sal- | vation,*
and uphold me with a willing | spirit.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors | Your ways,*
and sinners will re- | turn to You.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*and to the Holy
| Spirit; as it was in the be- | ginning,* is now, and will be
forever. | Amen.**

KYRIE

LSB, p. 152

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Joel 2:12–19

The Old Testament Reading for Ash Wednesday is from Joel, the second chapter.

¹² “Yet even now,” declares the LORD,

“return to Me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;

call a solemn assembly;
¹⁶ gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.

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

¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep
and say, “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?””

¹⁸ Then the LORD became jealous for His land
and had pity on His people.

¹⁹ 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.”

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE

2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

The Epistle is from Second Corinthians, the fifth and sixth chapters.

^{20b} We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

¹ Working together with Him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³ We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

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

VERSE FOR LENT

LSB, p. 157

Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and abounding in steadfast love.

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter.

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.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN “Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” (*LSB 609*)

SERMON

OFFERTORY

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

For the faithful proclamation of Christ's saving name, that God's people may be strengthened in the true faith and His kingdom extended, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For the holy Christian Church throughout the world and for all who confess the name of Christ, that God would guard and defend us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For this congregation, its mission, and its people; for the ability to meet the needs that arise as we do the work God has given us to do; and for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the educational institutions of our Synod; for our preschools, our day schools, and high schools, our colleges and universities, and for our seminaries, that those who teach and those who learn in them would be transformed by the wisdom of Christ, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who partake this day of Christ's holy body and blood, that in their eating and drinking they may receive the benefits of forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life and have a foretaste of the feast to come, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who have wandered from the faith, that the Holy Spirit would use us to call them home to the Father, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the government and all who have been set into positions of leadership, that they may use the authority entrusted to them honorably and for the good of the people, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who serve in worthy occupations, professions, arts, and sciences, that God would grant them skill and integrity in the performance of their responsibilities and valued service through their vocations, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who suffer from hunger, homelessness, poverty, or unemployment, that God's great mercy and love would preserve and relieve them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all the faithful, that the Spirit would lead them to cheerful, generous giving from the bounty the Lord provides, to support the Church and to help those in need, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who are sick, [*especially . . .*], that God would grant healing to their bodies and strength to bear their infirmities with patience and grace, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

For those who mourn, [*especially . . .*], that in their time of sorrow they would not lose hope but rely on God’s promise that He will never leave them or forsake them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who rejoice in the rich blessings of God, that they may always remember the Giver of every gift and give Him heartfelt thanks, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

These and any other things You would have us ask of You, heavenly Father, grant to us for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

CLOSING COLLECT

Gracious and merciful God, You call Your people to return, and You forgive the sins of all who come to You with penitent and contrite hearts. Grant us the spirit of true repentance to acknowledge our sins and to find in You forgiveness and restoration, wholeness and peace; through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Redeemer. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

HYMN “O Lord, throughout These Forty Days” (*LSB 418*)