
Ash Wednesday

Prelude

Greeting: Welcome one and all to the beginning of our Lenten journey. Ash Wednesday is an opportunity for us to look inward towards all that may be keeping us from authentic living. It also invites us into a time of challenging those things that may cause us to feel distanced and detached from God.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Land Acknowledgement

Call to Worship:

One: To you, O Lord, we lift our hearts.

All: In you, O Lord, we place our trust.

One: From you, O Lord, we seek your grace.

All: With you, O Lord, we work towards your Kingdom.

One: Beside you, O Lord, we learn humility.

All: To you, O Lord, we dedicate our lives.

Opening Prayer: (Unison)

Gracious God, this evening as we follow your Spirit, we thank you for the gift of your unfailing presence within our lives. As we journey through these next forty days of Lent help us, in our healing and our growing, to see your infinite love surrounding, guiding, and embracing us both in challenge and in joy. As our hearts reach out to your heart, in ashes and thanksgiving, allow us to hear your voice, naming us as beloved and inviting us once again to walk with you. In Jesus' tender name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: "Come Touch Our Hearts" **MV#12**

Reading: *Selected Versus from the Gospel of Matthew*

"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: "Missing the Mark"

Hymn: "As the Sun with Longer Journey" **VU#111**

Pastoral Prayer/Lord's Prayer

Imposition of Ashes:

Like those that have gone before us walking this road of Christian faith, this day we to wear the mark of the cross. This mark is perhaps more public, more confessing than other crosses we bear throughout the year. This mere mark, however gritty or dirty a smudge, is humbling, challenging, and reassuring.

We wear this mark to recognize that we have missed the mark, that we have within us regrets, dreams that have not been realized, wrongs that have not been righted. We wear this mark as a reminder of all that separates us from our journey with Jesus and one another, and so we pray:

God, you have called us to be pilgrims. Forgive us when we weary of the journey seeking security rather than service and comfort over challenge. Forgive us when we allow our wounded selves to separate us from your call and grant us spirits eager to follow you to into the new life of Easter. In all we have done, and all we have left undone, allow your grace to realign us until we once again, join you on this journey. Amen.

Friends, know now that there is nothing in this world that can possibly separate you from the love of God; no brokenness too great that God cannot heal, no distance too large that God cannot cross, no hidden pain so deep that God cannot attend. Be assured now, that we are a loved, we are forgiven, and through grace, we are made whole.

We now mark ourselves knowing that it was from dust that we came, and it is to dust we will return.

(Silence)

Later this evening as we all wash this mark from our face with water, that water rushes over our foreheads as once it did at our baptism. In that action, know that you are God's own, you have been named and claimed since long before your birth and as the ash falls from your face know the love of Christ invites you to begin this journey anew...

Blessing: May the blessing of God give us strength for the journey; may the Spirit of wisdom give us vision for the road; may the love of Christ make us carrying companions; as together we go forth in this Lenten time, **Amen.**

Postlude