

ST. STEPHEN/ST. JOHN

ASH WEDNESDAY – FEBRUARY 17, 2021

INVOCATION

P: Sisters and brothers in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' Passover from death to life. In this way our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent: self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love. Strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament, let us begin our journey through these forty days in confession.

P: Most holy and merciful Father:

C: 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.

P: 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 ourselves have been forgiven.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: We have been deaf 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.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives; our self-indulgent ways; our anger at our own frustration; and our envy of those more fortunate than we are.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: We confess to you, Lord, our love of worldly goods and comforts; our dishonesty in daily life and work; our negligence in prayer and worship; and our failure to live out our baptismal calling.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: We confess to you, Lord, the wrongs we have done or condoned; our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty; all false judgments and uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors; and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us.

C: Have mercy on us, Lord.

P: Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

C: Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great. Amen.

HYMN (#1) “Lord Jesus, Think on Me” #599 (ELW)

*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, nor let me go astray;
through darkness and perplexity point out your chosen way.*

1ST READING pages 704-705 OT NRSV (Pew Bible)

A reading from Isaiah - the 58th Chapter

Isaiah 58:1-12

After EACH reading:

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God!

PSALM 51:1-17 NRSV

1) Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

2) **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.**

3) For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

4) **Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.**

- 5) Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 6) **You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**
- 7) Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8) **Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**
- 9) Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10) Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11) Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.
- 12) Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,
and uphold me with thy free Spirit.
- 13) Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- 14) **Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.**
- 15) O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16) **For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.**
- 17) The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

LENTEN GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Return to the Lord your God ... page 151 (ELW)

GOSPEL

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN (#2) “Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church” #321 ELW

*Eternal Lord, of love behold your church
walking once more the pilgrim way of Lent,
Led by your cloud by day, by night your fire.
Moved by your love and toward your presence bent.*

*So daily dying to the way of self,
so daily living in your way of love,
We walk the road, Lord Jesus, that you trod,
knowing ourselves baptized into your death:*

APOSTLES' CREED

PRAYERS

P: Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

PEACE

INVITATION TO RECEIVE ASHES

P: Friends in Christ, ashes have long been a symbol for grief and humiliation. They represent our unworthiness in the presence of God, and when they are applied to the body at times of fasting, they become a symbol for our sorrow over sin.

Ashes can also represent purification. When a burnt offering was made to God, the ashes that remained represented the cleansing that results from such a sacrifice. We use ashes to represent both our sorrow over our sin, and our desperate need for God's forgiveness. By the grace of God and the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, these same ashes remind us that we have been made clean and set free from the power of sin and death.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray:

C: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so we may remember that only by your sacrifice are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: I invite you to come and receive the sign of ashes on your forehead or the back of your hand, and then to celebrate the forgiving and undying love of God as you receive the Lord's Supper.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES AND DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

COMMUNION BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

DISMISSAL

P: Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: Thanks be to God.