

GREETING

One: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

All: And also with you.

One: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

All: God's mercy endures forever.

Welcome to this Ash Wednesday Service, and welcome to <church name>. We are glad to have our brothers and sisters from <church name> worshiping with us tonight, and we are grateful to all those watching online, and to all who have joined us for worship this evening.

We are all people, made in the image of the One Who created us. We come in different shapes, different sizes, and different colors. We are all created in the image of God, yet each of us possesses traits that make us unique from one another.

Today marks the start of our Lenten journey. Lent is a season of reflection. . . of introspection and repentance.

Here in the chancel area, you see an assortment of mirrors - different shapes, different sizes, different styles, different colors. . . one purpose. The mirror reflects.

As we travel through this season of Lent, I want to challenge each of us to spend time in prayer and reflect, to spend time looking inward and talking with God about what we see.

- What is reflected within us? In our thoughts and our actions? In our words? In our attitudes?
- What is within us that does not line up with the word of God?
- What are we reflecting outward to others?
- Are we reflecting darkness or light?
- Who's been winning the war - the flesh? Or the Spirit?

We are created as image bearers of Yahweh. He has not plunked us down on this planet and left us to our own devices. He gave us the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, to guide and empower us, and if we ask, He can fix the things in us that are broken, askew, or unbalanced.

This fixing, this transformation, may take time. It may be a process. But He who has called us is faithful, and the One who started a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. And it begins tonight with this service of prayer and repentance.

OPENING PRAYER

UMH #353

Gracious God,
Maker of every thing and judge of all that You have made,
from the dust of the earth You have formed us,
and from the dust of death You would raise us up.
Open our hearts that we may acknowledge our failings.
Open our lips that we may declare your praise.
By the redemptive power of the cross,
create in us clean hearts
and put within us a new spirit,
that we may repent of our sins
and lead lives worthy of Your calling.
Remind us that we are your beloved children,
and we belong to you, in both life and death.
Lead us in paths of righteousness
for Your name's sake;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Joel 2:12-13

As we begin our time of worship, let's join God's heart in the book of Joel.

<Passage is read.>

*HYMN #269

Lord, Who Throughout These Forth Days

*CALL TO REPENTANCE

Ash Wednesday is a time of repentance from sin. Second Corinthians 7:10 says, "Godly sorrow produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but worldly sorrow, the hopeless sorrow of those who do not believe, produces death."

Repentance involves a feeling of regret and remorse, but it is also a conviction of the enormity and offensiveness of sin, and it is meant to lead us back to God. Repentance involves a turning away from sin with a resolve to obey God. We still need God's grace to continue growing to be more like Jesus, to be a reflection of the Son, to bear His image honestly and faithfully. Therefore, let's turn to God in repentance and seek a greater measure of grace and holiness in our lives.

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Please join me in our Prayer of Confession.

Most holy and merciful Father,

we confess to you, to one another,

and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth,

that we have sinned, through our own fault,

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, mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ,

and we have grieved your Holy Spirit.

One: Lord, have mercy on us:

All: For we have sinned against you.

One: For all our unfaithfulness and disobedience, for our vanity, pride, and hypocrisy; Lord, have mercy on us:

All: For we have sinned against you.

One: For our self-pity and impatience, for our quickness to point out the speck in our neighbor's eye while steadfastly ignoring the log in our own; Lord, have mercy on us:

All: For we have sinned against you.

One: For our unrighteous anger, bitterness, and resentment; for all lies, gossip, and slander against our neighbors; Lord, have mercy on us:

All: For we have sinned against you.

One: For allowing fear to divide us, for choosing hatred over love, for being slow to give grace and quick to judge; Lord, have mercy on us:

All: For we have sinned against you.

One: For our negligence in prayer and worship, for our presumption and abuse of your means of grace, for our failure to commend the faith that is in us; Lord, have mercy on us:

All: For we have sinned against you.

Hear our prayer, Creator God, who makes good things – even out of dust. Create in us and through us once again, that we may be reflections of your grace, mercy and love to all the world. Amen.

One: You may be seated.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 51:1-17

The inward reflections of Lent are meant to show us our faults and failings, not so we can feel shame or carry guilt, but so we would return to God for forgiveness and live in freedom. So tonight we consider these questions: What are we reflecting to others? What is shown in our thoughts, words, and actions? Is there anything within us that does not line up with God's word?

As we ponder these queries, let us also hear the words of the psalmist.

<Passage is read.>

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENTEN DISCIPLINES

You may be seated.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

the early Christians observed with great devotion
the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection,
and it became the custom of the Church
that before the Easter celebration
there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season, converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism.

It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins
and had separated themselves from the community of faith
were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness,
and restored to participation in the life of the Church.

In this way the whole congregation
was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness
proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ
and the need we all have to renew our faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church,

to observe a holy Lent:

by self-examination and repentance;
by prayer, fasting, and self-denial;
and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance,

and as a mark of our mortal nature,
let us now bow our hearts before our Creator and Redeemer.

A MOMENT FOR SILENT PRAYER

THANKSGIVING OVER THE ASHES

****Give a few moments for prayer and reflection before standing to pray.***

Let us pray.

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 that we may remember
that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES (*Done without music*)

***Worship leaders move to the Communion table. Pastor will dip his thumb in the ashes and impose ashes on assistants in the format outlined below. One assistant will impose ashes on pastor in like manner. Assistants return to their seats. Pastor will gesture to invite the congregation to come forward.*

Pastor will impose ashes on the forehead of each person, one at a time, and will say as he or she does: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

At the conclusion of the imposition, pastor will return to the pulpit and say:

"Our almighty and merciful God,
does not desire the death of a sinner.
Instead, he desires that we turn from wickedness and live.
We have repented before him,
and we know that he is faithful and just and forgives us of our sins,
restoring us by his Holy Spirit to newness of life.
We give thanks to God. Hallelujah! Amen."

*HYMN #382

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

SCRIPTURE READING

Philippians 3:7-14

You may be seated.

As we reflect this evening through scripture, song, and prayer, let's also consider our hearts. What is reflected within us? Are we reflecting darkness or light? Where does our treasure truly lie? Are there things in our lives that distract us and pull us away from God?

As you ponder these questions, I also invite you to consider these words from the apostle Paul.

<Passage is read.>

A MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

*****Pastor should give a few moments in silence before moving to the Communion table for the Great Thanksgiving.***

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. ***The pastor may lift hands and keep them raised.*

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,

always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

You brought all things into being and called them good.

From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image
and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away, and our love failed,
your love remained steadfast.

When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights,
you bore up the ark on the waters, saved Noah and his family,
and made covenant with every living creature on earth.

When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights,
you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people.

When your people forsook your covenant,
your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights;
and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

***The pastor may lower hands.*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

***The pastor may raise hands.*

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
When you gave him to save us from our sin,
your Spirit led him into the wilderness,
where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry.
When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life,
presented him alive to the apostles during forty days,
and exalted him at your right hand.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.
Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter,
you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts,
that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced
to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

***The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread, or touch the bread, or lift the bread.*

On the night in which he gave himself up for us,
Christ took the bread, gave thanks to you,
broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

***The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the cup, or touch the cup, or lift the cup.*

When the supper was over Jesus took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

***The pastor may raise hands.*

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving,
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

***The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and cup.*

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and the fruit of the vine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world
the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

***The pastor may raise hands.*

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory,
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and for ever.

Amen.

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:

**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.**

Amen.

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.

The bread which we break
is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup over which we give thanks
is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

Christ our Lord invites to his table
all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another.

This table is his table, and you are invited to come and receive.

SHARING THE BREAD AND THE CUP

***Communion medley begins to play. Assistants join pastor at the table. Assistants will serve pastor first, and pastor will be seated while assistants serve the congregation. When all the congregation is served, assistants will serve one another and then return to the chancel area. If music is still playing, let it finish before praying. Pastor will pray.*

PRAYER AFTER THE MEAL

Please pray with me.

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery
in which you have given yourself to us.

Grant that we may go into the world
in the strength of your Spirit,
to give ourselves for others,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*HYMN #420 *Breathe On Me, Breath of God*

*SCRIPTURE READING *Romans 7:4-6*

The last question I asked at the beginning of this service was this: “Who has been winning the war? The flesh? Or the Spirit?”

This evening, we have begun our Lenten journey, and we have repented before the Lord our God. We do not walk this journey alone. Hear these words also from the apostle Paul.

<Passage is read.>

*DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

Go forth in peace, as one created in the image of God,
and a reflection of his love.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

Amen.

*POSTLUDE *Nearer My God to Thee/'Tis So Sweet*

CREDITS

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Postlude by Music_For_Videos at pixabay.com

- *Nearer My God to Thee*
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- *Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*
Music by Music_For_Videos from Pixabay.com

- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*
Music by Rebecca Powell at <https://www.calvarybaptistnorfolk.org/piano-accompaniment>

Call to Repentance adapted from <http://www.seedbed.com/an-order-of-service-for-ash-Wednesday>

Prayer of Confession adapted from *Litany of Penitence*.

Hymns are from *The United Methodist Hymnal*.