



Ash Wednesday Service

The Spirit Anointed Christ for Mercy – Lenten Worship Series

Mercy forever.

Ash Wednesday is one of the most solemn days of the church year. This liturgy marks the beginning of a penitential discipline climaxing on Maundy Thursday. The mood is penitential and reflective on our baptismal faith and life. The organ is silent before and after worship. Worshipers are asked to keep reverent silence before the service and leave the service in silence. There will be no greeting at the door by the pastor. Originally, Lent was the time when candidates for Holy Baptism were intently preparing to be baptized at the Vigil of Easter. We, too, in this season of Lent prepare ourselves to remember our Baptism at Easter as we ritually “pass over” with Jesus from death to new life. During this Lenten season will remember Jesus’ Baptism, His anointing with the Holy Spirit, and His words in Luke 4 – that He was anointed to show, and to be, mercy. As His people – hearing Him proclaim God’s Word and being God’s Word as Prophet; seeing Him sacrifice Himself on a cross and know that He intercedes for us as Priest; and knowing that we live under Him as King in righteousness and purity – we will be reminded of our work of mercy. *(Each service will present an opportunity to give of our treasures to the church’s corporate mercy work through LCMS World Relief and Human Care.)*

Today, worshipers will have the opportunity to receive ashes on their foreheads as a sign of penitence and baptismal remembrance. The ashes are prepared by burning palm branches from last Palm Sunday. In a dramatic way, their use suggests God’s judgment and condemnation of sin, our frailty and total dependence on God, and humiliation and repentance. The words spoken as ashes are imposing, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” were first spoken to Adam after his fall into sin. We are forcefully reminded of the words of the committal in the Christian Burial service, “... earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Ashes also suggest cleansing and renewal. They were once used as a cleaning agent. Thus, ashes imposed in the shape of a cross symbolize both judgment and baptismal cleansing.

[The minister enters in silence.]

PSALM Psalm 51:1-13 Read responsively

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God, You love all that You have created and You forgive the sins of those who come to You with humble and contrite hearts.

People: **Create in us clean and honest hearts, so that, as we repent of our sins, we may receive full pardon and forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT Joel 2:12-19

EPISTLE Ephesians 1:3-14

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION “To Jordan’s River Came Our Lord” [LSB 405]

GOSPEL Luke 4:16-21

SERMON

SERMON HYMN “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed” [LSB 398]

INVITATION TO BE MERCIFUL AS OUR PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING LEADS US

Pastor: Dear ones in Christ, it was the custom in the early Church to prepare for the suffering and death of Christ on Good Friday and for the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord with special worship and acts of repentance and faith. Believers were invited to increase their prayer, to fast, and to increase their private meditation. Today, and throughout the Lenten season, we will be reminded of the message of pardon and absolution proclaimed in the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The proclamation of Law and Gospel on the Lord’s Day, and in special Lenten services, is intended to remind us of our need to renew our repentance and grow in our faith, and be the merciful people Christ has prepared us to be

I invite you to observe this season of Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, by reading God’s holy Word, and by giving of your substance as God leads you to special ministries of mercy which you will learn about. To begin this journey of repentance, and as a reminder of our mortal nature, let us now humble ourselves before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Pastor: Almighty God, You created us out of the dust of the ground. May these ashes remind us that we are dust and shall return to dust. May they also remind us of the cross of Christ by which we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

(Those who wish to receive ashes may come forward one at a time.)

[The minister imposes ashes on the forehead with the sign of the cross — a reminder of the cross placed on the forehead at the time of Baptism — with the words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The congregation remains silent.]

LITANY OF CONFESSION (based on LSB 398)

Pastor: Hail to the Lord’s anointed, Great David’s greater son! Hail in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun! Let us come to Him confessing our sins because He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free, to take away transgression, and rule in equity.

People: We confess to You and to one another, that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. Set us free from our oppressors

and rule over us in mercy.

Pastor: He comes with rescue speedy to those who suffer wrong. To help the poor and needy and bid the weak be strong.

People: **We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not loved You with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven. We have failed to serve others as Christ has served us. We have forgotten that you want us to be your hands and feet of mercy.**

Pastor: To give them songs for sighing, their darkness turns to light, whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in His sight.

People: **We fail to share with vigor and enthusiasm the faith that is in us. We neglect prayer and worship. We often act with prejudice and contempt toward people who differ from us, rather than considering that they like us are objects of your mercy.**

Pastor: He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth: love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in His path to birth, before Him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go; and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.

People: **We have been impatient as we wait for Your will to be done. We have sought to satisfy our own appetites by exploiting others. We envy those more fortunate than ourselves. Instead of seeking your peace we delight in conflict.**

Pastor: Kings shall fall down before Him and gold and incense bring; all nations shall adore Him, His praise all people sing. To Him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend; His kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.

People: **We confess to You, O Lord that we have hoarded our gold and offering and have been unwise and foolish in our management of time in your service. Our prayers are erratic and selfish, and we have sought our kingdoms and not yours. For these and all other sins of thoughts and desires, of words and actions, we ask your forgiveness and your mercy.**

ABSOLUTION

Pastor: Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You do not desire the death of sinners, but rather You call us to turn from our wicked ways and live through our anointed Prophet the Christ. You have had mercy upon us. You graciously forgive our sins through the merits of our gracious and loving High Priest our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You strengthen us by the power of the Holy Spirit to amend our sinful lives according to Your will, and keep us in Your grace to eternal life by the life we live in the Kingdom of Grace under our merciful King. You Promise us forgiveness through your Anointed One. Bless us for Jesus sake and in His name – Amen

I, therefore, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, in His stead and by His command, forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Pastor: As we begin our journey through this season of repentance and renewal, let us return to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful. O God, You call us to turn from sin and to live in the joy and freedom of the Kingdom of your Son. You invite us to receive the forgiveness earned through the merits of our Priest Jesus Christ. Give us strength through the word of our Prophet Jesus by equipping us with your word on our Lenten journey. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: O God, You call people everywhere to work for the good of all humanity. Empower the leaders of the nations to be ambassadors of mercy. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: O God, grant compassion to all who minister to the sick and infirm: medical professionals, healing practitioners, and all caregivers. Show Your mercy to those who are ill [especially] and bring them peace of mind and heart. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: O God, You call us to turn from our sin and to live for You alone. Guide us through these 40 days of Lent to a fuller appreciation of Your baptismal grace. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: hear our prayer.

Pastor: Merciful God, because Jesus was anointed for mercy we ask you to bless the work of the mercy arm of our church, LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Accept the sacrifice of our treasure as we send it to be used as needed to your glory and the benefit of our neighbors; hear our cry when we call to You; hear us as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

LORD'S PRAYER

OFFERING Special offering designated for LCMS World Relief and Human Care "where needed most."

If Holy Communion is celebrated, worship continues with the Preface. If not:

HYMN "O Lord, throughout These Forty Days" [LSB 418]

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn His face toward you and + give you peace (*Numbers 6:24-26*).

People: Amen.