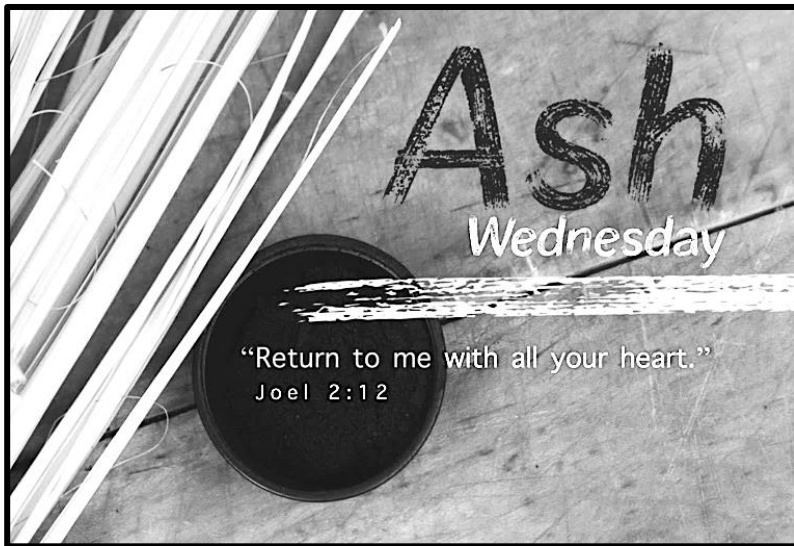


**St. James Lutheran Church  
Fishersville, VA  
February 14, 2024**



**Introduction**

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. We begin the journey today without an opening hymn going directly to hear God's word. We continue with an extended confession and marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ.

**Welcome**

**PSALM: Psalm 51:1-18**

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your lovingkindness;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.  
<sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.**  
<sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
<sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight.**  
<sup>5</sup>And so you are justified when you speak  
and upright in your judgment.  
<sup>6</sup>**Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.**  
<sup>7</sup>For behold, you look for truth deep within me,  
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.  
<sup>8</sup>**Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;  
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**  
<sup>9</sup>Make me hear of joy and gladness,  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

<sup>10</sup>**Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.**  
<sup>11</sup>Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
<sup>12</sup>**Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**  
<sup>13</sup>Give me the joy of your saving help again  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.  
<sup>14</sup>**I shall teach your ways to the wicked,  
and sinners shall return to you.**  
<sup>15</sup>Deliver me from death, O God,  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,  
O God of my salvation.  
<sup>16</sup>**Open my lips, O Lord,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.**  
<sup>17</sup>Had you desired it, I would have offered  
sacrifice,  
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.  
<sup>18</sup>**The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God,  
you will not despise.**

**EXHORTATION**

Brothers and sisters: God created us to experience joy in communion with him, to love all humanity, and to live in harmony with all of his creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. Also, by our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love—the discipline of Lent—help us to wage our spiritual warfare. I invite you, therefore, to commit yourselves to this struggle and confess your sins, asking our Father for strength to persevere in your Lenten discipline.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*

(Please be seated)

## **CONFESSION**

Most holy and merciful Father:

**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.**

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 have been forgiven.

**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

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.

**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,  
**we confess to you, Lord.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,  
**we confess to you, Lord.**

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,  
**we confess to you, Lord.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,  
**we confess to you, Lord.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,  
**we confess to you, Lord.**

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,  
**accept our repentance, Lord.**

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,  
**accept our repentance, Lord.**

For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,  
**accept our repentance, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.  
**Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great. Amen**

*Those who desire to receive ashes come forward.*

*The ministers apply ashes to the forehead of each person with the words:*

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

*After all who desire ashes have received them, the minister leads the congregation in the conclusion of the confession.*

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,  
**that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

By the cross and Passion of your Son, our Lord,

**bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, and that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

*Silence for reflection.*

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may obtain from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen**

## **FIRST LESSON:**

*Because of the coming day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community declares that God is gracious and asks God to spare the people lest the nations doubt God's power to save.*

### **Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

<sup>1</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
    sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
    for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—  
<sup>2</sup>a day of darkness and gloom,  
    a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains  
    a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
    nor will be again after them  
    in ages to come.

<sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD,  
    return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup>rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the LORD, your God  
    for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
    and relents from punishing.

<sup>14</sup>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?

<sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
    sanctify a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
<sup>16</sup>gather the people.  
Sanctify the congregation;  
    assemble the aged;  
gather the children,  
    even infants at the breast.

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

<sup>17</sup>Between the vestibule and the altar  
    let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.  
Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,  
    and do not make your heritage a mockery,  
    a byword among the nations.  
Why should it be said among the peoples,  
    'Where is their God?'"

Here ends the reading.

**Thanks be to God.**

## SECOND LESSON:

*The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.*

### 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10

<sup>20b</sup>We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6:1</sup>As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup>We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Here ends the reading.

**Thanks be to God.**



### GOSPEL: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.*

hypocrites

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>14</sup>"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.

<sup>24</sup>"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the 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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>54</sup>"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. <sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>164</sup>"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. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on

your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>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.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON: Rev. Gordon Putnam**

**HYMN: “O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days” (LBW 99)**

With the whole church, let us confess our faith by using the words of the Nicene Creed.

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary,  
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

## THE PRAYERS

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

*A brief silence.*

You call us to return to you, steadfast God. Renew a right spirit within the church and cleanse the hearts of your people. Strengthen those who proclaim your gospel in word and deed. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You sustain your creation, generous God. Supply all that is needful for life to flourish. Protect endangered species and fragile habitats. Teach us to live lightly upon the earth and to honor it as our home. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You seek justice and peace, righteous God. Rebuild cities and homelands devastated by war. Provide welcome, help, and safety to refugees. Prosper negotiations that lead to lasting peace among the nations. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You care for all people, loving God. Heal any who are scarred by violence, addiction, or trauma of any kind. Comfort those who grieve and bring relief to any in pain. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You gather this assembly, abiding God. Unite us in serving our neighbors and working for justice. We pray for caregivers and people who are hospitalized, in treatment, or recovering from illness. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You redeem us from death, faithful God. We give thanks for those who served you in the church. Bring us with all the saints into everlasting joy. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

(Greet each other in the peace of the Lord.)

## OFFERING

**Let us pray.**

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be  
fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -  
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your  
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

## DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

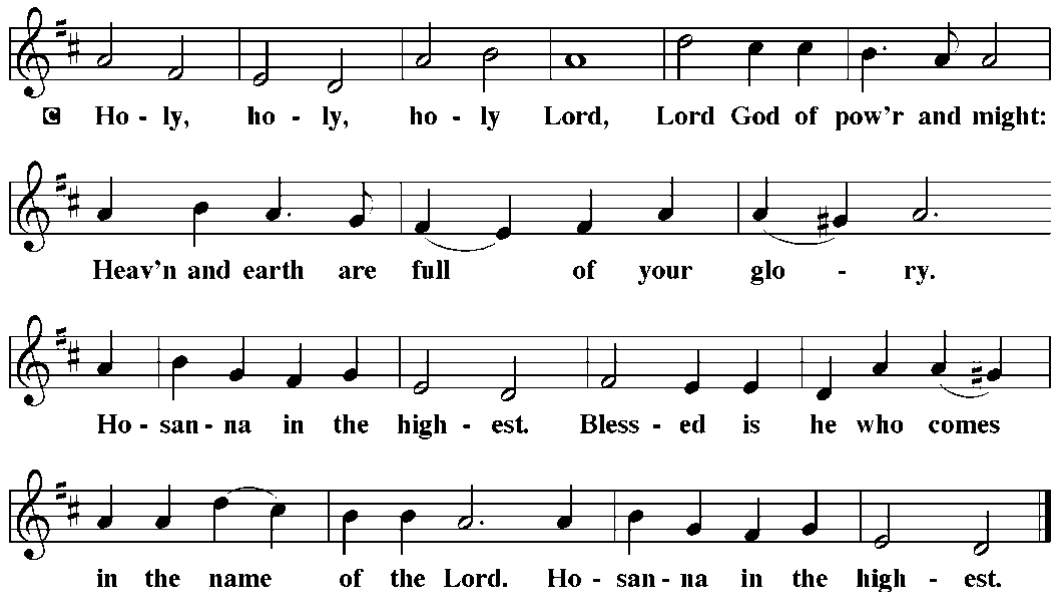
**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

## PREFACE

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. You bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast. Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:  
Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

## THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,  
that all those who believe in him should not perish,  
but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you  
for the salvation you have prepared for us through  
Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,  
that we may receive our Lord with a living faith  
as he comes to us in his holy supper.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.  
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the  
forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**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 and ever. Amen.**

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

At Jesus' table, heaven and earth are joined as one.  
Come and see.

## **COMMUNION**

The body of Christ, given for you.  
The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
**Amen.**

## **POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ  
strengthen you and keep you in his grace.  
**Amen.**

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life; and we pray that in your mercy you would strengthen us, through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen**

## **CLOSING HYMN: "Glory Be to Jesus" (LBW 95)**

## **BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.  
**Amen**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. You are God's beloved.  
**Thanks be to God.**

Thank you to Florence Jowers for playing the organ for us today.
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