

Meditation Focus

Joel 2:12-13

“Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts.
Come with fasting and weeping and mourning.
Don’t tear your clothes in your grief; instead, tear your hearts.”
Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful.

NLT

PRELUDE WELCOME

Pastor John Kasper

***HYMN** “Grace Greater Than Our Sin” P. 365

PRAYER OF CONFESSION – adapted from Psalm 119:65-72

Liturgist:

Deal with your servants, O Lord, even as you have said in your Word. Teach us knowledge and good sense; for, we are committed to living your way.

Congregation:

We confess that we are prone to wander off. We need your discipline so that we will closely follow your Word.

Liturgist: You alone are good and you alone are the source of good. Train us in your goodness.

Congregation:

The godless smear lies about us, our reputation is being ruined, and our first instinct is to retaliate. But our desire is to focus on you and to obey you with all our heart.

Liturgist: Though it is difficult to accept at the time, your discipline is just what we need so that we will return to you and your Word.

Congregation:

The truth from you is more precious than gold or silver. Lord, nothing I desire compares with you.

***HYMN** “More Precious Than Silver” (2 x’s) P. 2065

READING “Remember”

PRAYER OF AGREEMENT AND BLESSING OVER THE ASHES –

Pastor John:

Remember, you were made from dust and to dust you shall return.

Congregation:

Even after this body has decayed, yet in my flesh I will see God!

Pastor John:

Give your bodies to God Let them be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Congregation:

O God our Creator, we confess that we have not honored you with our bodies. Our feet are quick to walk the ways of wickedness. Our hands are eager to grasp and hold what is not truly ours. Our eyes look out for every kind of evil. Our ears listen to rumors, gossip, and lies. We open our mouths when we ought not to speak and close them when we ought to speak truth. And from our hearts come all manner of ill intention.

Pastor John:

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

Congregation:

Even after this body has decayed, yet in my flesh I will see God!

All: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. As these ashes are placed upon my head, may I feel the ashes of mortality upon my heart. Give me, please, the courage to acknowledge them. Then give me the faithful sight to see them on your forehead; for you died the death in my place, my Redeemer and my Lord. Amen.

CHORAL ANTHEM “Lord, I Stretch My Hands to You”

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Jesus’ Invitation: Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

“Life Questions”

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 7:13-14

MESSAGE “Which Way Shall I Choose?” Pastor John Kasper

*HYMN "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" P.2129

INVITATION TO FAST: Dying to Our Flesh, Growing in Our Spirit
(see insert)

*HYMN "I Surrender All" P. 354

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

What do people do?



Ash Wednesday is the day after [Shrove Tuesday](#), which often features various carnival or Mardi Gras celebrations in many countries. Ash Wednesday has some variations across cultures. For example, some children in Iceland go from door to door

and sing songs for treats on the day. Traditionally, they would try to attach small bags of ashes or stones to the back of people's clothing. Many people in countries where Ash Wednesday is a holiday may spend the day at home with family and friends or catch up on sleep. Some people attend Ash Wednesday church services. Many Christians believe that Ash Wednesday is a day of penitence or repentance for one's past wrongdoings. Ash Wednesday church services usually include priests marking individuals with previously blessed ashes on their forehead in form of the cross. The concept of Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is observed on a Monday in countries such as Cyprus and Greece. This is because many eastern churches do not generally observe Ash Wednesday but they observe Ash Monday (also known as Clean Monday or Green Monday) in its place. Many people observe a fast that includes avoiding meat, eggs, dairy products and animal or vegetable oils.

Background

The name "Ash Wednesday" is derived from the custom of marking foreheads of the faithful with blessed ashes as a sign of penitence and humility. The Lent season has been a time for self-examination and penitence prior to Easter for many centuries. The day also comes from the Saxon *lengten-tide*, referring to the days and the coming of spring in the northern hemisphere.

This 40-day period of abstinence recalls the fasts of Moses, Elijah and Jesus, all of which lasted for 40 days according to the Christian scripture. It originally began in the western church on a Sunday. However, Pope Gregory I moved the beginning of Lent four days ahead in the late sixth century because Sundays were feast days.

Symbols

The ashes that priests use on Ash Wednesday usually come from the remains of burned palms that were blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday. They symbolize death, mortality and sorrow for sin. The marking of ashes on foreheads in form of a cross also symbolizes that sins are forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection.



February 14, 2018

7:00 p.m.