

## Ash Wednesday Service – Our Savior Lutheran Church

### The First Mountain - The Spirit Anointed Christ for Mercy

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.

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, whole verse by whole verse. Congregation in **BOLD.***)

### Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!**

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

**Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.**

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

**Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.**

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.**

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, in now, and forever shall be, world without end. Amen**

**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**Return to the Lord**

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. 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?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

**The Lord Had Pity**

Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.

**EPISTLE** Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

**GOSPEL** Luke 4:16-21**Jesus Rejected at Nazareth**

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

**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**

**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

### **THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

#### **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, hear our cry when we call to You; hear us as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

#### **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.

**Pastor:** Go in Peace – serve the Lord!

**People:** Thanks Be to God.