



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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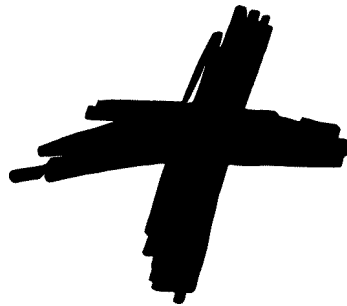
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### Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. 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. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

*We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.*

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God's Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran Church worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmi̓ñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

## GATHERING

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

KYRIE (p. 203) verse 1

#### PSALM: PSALM 51:1-8

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
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 offenses,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- <sup>4</sup> **Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.**
- <sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- <sup>6</sup> **Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**
- <sup>7</sup> Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> **Let me hear joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

KYRIE (p. 203) verse 2

#### PSALM: PSALM 51:9–17

- <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my wickedness.
- <sup>10</sup> **Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.**
- <sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> **Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**
- <sup>13</sup> Let me teach your ways to offenders,  
and sinners shall be restored to you.
- <sup>14</sup> **Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**
- <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- <sup>16</sup> **For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.**
- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

KYRIE (p. 203) verse 3

**GREETING** (p. 251)

The mercy of God,  
The steadfast love of Christ,  
And the great compassion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY** (p. 251)

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 receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**HYMN:** I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (#325)

**WORD**

**FIRST READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

A reading from Joel.

*Because of the coming Day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.*

<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, abounding in steadfast love,  
    and relenting from punishment.

<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;  
    consecrate a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;

<sup>16</sup> gather the people.  
Consecrate 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?' "

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10**

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

*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.*

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

<sup>6:1</sup> As we work together with him, we entreat 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."

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, 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: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> in 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 look—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.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)**

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

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**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.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites 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>5</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>16</sup> “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces 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**

O Lord, by your Spirit open to us your Word of Life, that your truth might spring up in us and never fail, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

You know, I’ve never really been one to reuse a sermon, but I have to admit, I was reaaaally tempted to do so tonight.

I mean, I had a pretty busy week. Two funerals, a joint worship service, and to top it off, Jean isn’t in the office to back me up when I need it. That means I had to make the bulletins for the funeral that happened yesterday, I had to set things up for tonight, and I had to remember to put up a sign on our front door this past Sunday reminding people that we were worshipping in a different location. Well, 2 out of 3 isn’t bad, I guess.

And so with all this stuff going on this week, time and energy was a bit scarce for me. Not to mention that the highly anticipated Daredevil series premiered on Disney+ last night, so that meant I had even less time to prepare for today. So because of all that, you can see why I was really tempted to just reuse an old sermon tonight. That, and... well... this is Ash Wednesday we’re talking about. Not exactly the most popular Wednesday of the year. Not even the most popular Wednesday of this week, and that’s quite a feat seeing as how it’s the only Wednesday we get. At any rate, we usually don’t get very many people to show up for this service. We usually don’t get all that much interest. We usually don’t have too many ears that will be hearing these words that are being spoken tonight.

And not only that, but Ash Wednesday gets the same readings every year. While most of the Sunday texts at least are on a three year rotation, thanks to the Lectionary, Ash Wednesday isn't afforded that luxury. So if my complex calculations are correct, that means this would be my 16th time preaching these same exact texts over the past 16 years. That's a pretty big selection of old sermons out of which I could have just picked one to reuse.

So I really wondered if I should have even bothered to write a new one.

I mean, it's not like anyone would notice, right? I'm sure that these sermons, how ever wonderful and profound they might be, are eventually forgotten in the years, the months, or even the minutes after they're preached. I'm sure that no one here would recognise something I say tonight as something I've said before. And even if you did, it's not like you would take the time to look back through my past sermons to verify it. Furthermore, even if I did decide to repeat an old sermon, I'm sure that you all would have been understanding and gracious enough to say that it'd be ok.

Then promptly fire me for mismanaging my time and plagiarizing myself.

Of course, I'm kidding. I know you wouldn't fire me for that. For being obnoxious, obtuse, and oblivious, maybe, but not for plagiarizing myself. But I am serious about really wanting to reuse a sermon tonight. This week I just felt so busy, so tired, so *distracted* that I didn't know if I had it in me to come up with something new for this Ash Wednesday. But it was in that struggle, it was in this moral dilemma that I was facing, it was in this almost feeling like I was at the end of my rope that I saw where the gospel could actually be seen by me and hopefully by you in this beginning of the Lenten season.

Like I was saying, these are the same texts that we get year after year. And this isn't the most popular or most attended day of the church calendar. This whole season of Lent isn't even marketable in any way. I mean, it's not fun to bring up and reflect upon our shortcomings. It isn't encouraging to check ourselves and bring to light what we need to repent from. It's not something to look forward to when we are asked to be more disciplined and make sacrifices. It's just *Lent*. A season to be overlooked. A time to be forgotten. An excuse to just reuse a sermon.

But because this season is seen as this season is why we need this season. Let me explain. We've been conditioned by the world to think that we need to keep busy in order to look important. We are told by society that we need to horde as much power as we can through whatever means necessary in order to be respected. We have been raised to believe that we must always have the best because we deserve nothing less.

And in this global or at least Western mentality, we begin to think that we don't need a season like Lent. We think that we don't need to be called out for where we might be lacking. We think that we don't need to be humbled enough to see how we have been forgiven, redeemed, and loved by God.

When in fact, maybe we really do.

Because in weeks like these when we are super busy and perhaps stressed out and feeling spread thin, we just need a break. In times like these when the world seems to be so up in the

air, corrupt, and power hungry, we need to stop and catch our breath. In our lives that are so full of distractions and demands on our time that suck up all our energy and emotion, we need to be reminded that we are but dust, and to dust we shall return.

This isn't to say that we don't matter because we are so temporary, but it does mean that we need a time in which we can peel back the layers of this dog eat dog world. It means that we need the space to temporarily drop things that aren't imperative to our community, our service, or our joy. It means that we need a whole church season to help us to examine the things that are holding us back, the things that take away our focus, the things that distract us from seeing the truth of who we are, whose we are, and the purpose and meaning that is given to us in life.

I get it though. Often we think our importance is based on what others think of us and letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing. That our respect comes from how we can perform and outperform and how generous and self-sacrificing we can look. That our identities are seen in what we do, how well we do, and how much we do.

But the purpose and meaning that God gives isn't something to brag about, but it is something to proclaim. It isn't to be used just to impress others or lord it over them, but it is something that can be used to help, encourage, and support others. It isn't even for patting ourselves on the back in thinking that we've done good, but it is showing us how God loves us, blesses us, and calls us to live in community as the body of Christ in the world.

See, this purpose and meaning that we're reminded of in this season of Lent shows us that our contribution through our participation and service matters, reveals to us how our connection to each other in community is important, and reminds us that through it all, through the ups and down, the stresses and burdens, all the things that distract us from the truth, that we are and always will be God's dearly beloved.

See that is what Lent is about. It isn't just all gloomy and sad. It isn't all somber and strict. It isn't about giving things up for the sake of giving things up.

Instead, it's for the good of our souls in giving us the chance to heal from what ails us, to grow from underneath the distractions, and to be prepared for the salvation that we'll see not at the foot of the cross, but in the empty tomb. Lent provides for us the space to contemplate that promise. Lent affords us the time to regroup and refocus on what matters. Lent gives us the tools and the strength to rise up from the distractions and to see how God's love for us isn't dependant on us, but solely on God's benevolent grace and merciful blessing.

I don't know, maybe I should have reused a sermon after all. But this season of Lent, I'm going to try to do away with some of the unreal expectations I put on myself, those that distract me from my faith and service, and the things that block me from seeing my identity as a beloved child of God, saved and redeemed not because of what I can or can't do, but because God is, for you and for me and for all people, forever, eternal, and unending love.

In this season of Lent, let us be strengthened by God's grace, lifted up by God's mercy, and focussed on God's love. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Beneath the Cross of Jesus (#338)

### **INVITATION TO LENT** (p. 252)

Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

### **CONFESSION OF SIN** (p. 252)

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most holy and merciful God,  
**we confess to you and to one another,**  
**and before the whole company of heaven,**  
**that we have sinned by our fault,**  
**by our own fault,**  
**by our own most grievous 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, O God.**

We have shut our ears 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, O God.**

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.  
**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.  
**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.  
**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.  
**Have mercy on us, O God.**



Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

**Have mercy on us, O God.**

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

**Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.**

**IMPOSITION OF ASHES** (p. 254)

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth.

May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**HYMN:** Ubi caritas et amor (#642)

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

**Amen.**

**CONCLUDING PRAYER** (p. 254)

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**LORD'S PRAYER** (p. 112)

Gathered into one equal body by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

**BLESSING**

May the God of reconciliation bless you, the grace of our Lord Jesus keep you, and the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen you to love and to be loved, this day and always.

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, be reconciled to God and to each other.

**Thanks be to God.**