

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church



Ash Wednesday February 14, 2024

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.

Holy Communion

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

† Congregation stands as able

GATHERING

Prelude

Sandra Nearhoof

†

P: In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen

Gathering Hymn

"Forty Days and Forty Nights"

See Insert

Kyrie - Spoken

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Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray,

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

First Reading

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

¹Blow 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—

²a 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.

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³rend 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.

¹⁴Who 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?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather 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. ¹⁷Between 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?"

L: The word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 51:1-17

Spoken

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your ¹steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out ¹my offenses.

²**Wash me through and through ¹from my wickedness,
and cleanse me ¹from my sin.**

³For I know ¹my offenses,
and my sin is ev-¹er before me.

⁴**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil ¹in your sight;
so you are justified when you speak and right ¹in your judgment.**

⁵Indeed, I was born ¹steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my ¹mother's womb.

⁶**Indeed, you delight in truth ¹deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom ¹deep within.**

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I ¹shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be pur-¹er than snow.

⁸**Let me hear ¹joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken ¹may rejoice.**

⁹Hide your face ¹from my sins,
and blot out ¹all my wickedness.

¹⁰**Create in me a clean ¹heart, O God,
and renew a right spir-¹it within me.**

¹¹Cast me not away ¹from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir-¹it from me.

¹²**Restore to me the joy of ¹your salvation
and sustain me with your boun-¹tiful Spirit.**

¹³Let me teach your ways ¹to offenders,
and sinners shall be re-¹stored to you.

¹⁴**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of ¹my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing ¹of your righteousness.**

¹⁵O LORD, o-¹pen my lips,
and my mouth shall pro-¹claim your praise.

¹⁶**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or ¹I would give it.
You are not pleased ¹with burnt offering.**

¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a ¹troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will ¹not despise.

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10

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

^{6:1}As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For 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! ³We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge,

patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

L: The word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

† Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 6th Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹"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. ²"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. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵"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. ⁶But 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. ¹⁶"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. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so 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. ¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

The Hard Fact

Reverend Taylor Burton Edwards

Silence

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,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**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,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who 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**

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

The assembly kneels or sits. Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

P: Most holy and merciful God,

**C: 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.**

A: 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.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

A: 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.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

A: Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

A: Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

A: Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

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

C: Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

People may come forward and kneel or stand to receive the ashes.

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

P: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

C: that we may show forth your glory in the world.

P: By the cross and passion of your Son, of Savior,

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

P: 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.

C: Amen.

Choose to stand, kneel, or sit for prayers.

Prayers of Intercession

A: 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.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: 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.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: For all those who have asked us to pray for them...

C: Your mercy is great.

A: You redeem us from death, faithful God. We give thanks for those who served you in the church especially WJ Barrs and Eva Brown. Bring us with all the saints into everlasting joy . Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

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

C: Amen

MEAL

The gifts may be brought forward.

Offering Prayer

A: Jesus, you are the bread of life and the host of this meal. Bless these gifts that we have gathered that all people may know your goodness. Feed us not only with this holy food but with hunger for justice and peace. We pray this in your name.

C: Amen

† Great Thanksgiving-Spoken only

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Holy, Holy, Holy-*Spoken only*

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Anaphora-*Spoken only*

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Lord's Prayer "Our Father, who..."

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Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond Amen

† Prayer after Communion

A: 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.

C: Amen

SENDING

Blessing

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Remember the poor.

C: Thanks be to God.

ST. MATTHEW EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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A member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Southeastern Synod

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@st.matthewlutheranchurch4457/streams>

The Rev. Taylor Burton Edwards, Pastor

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