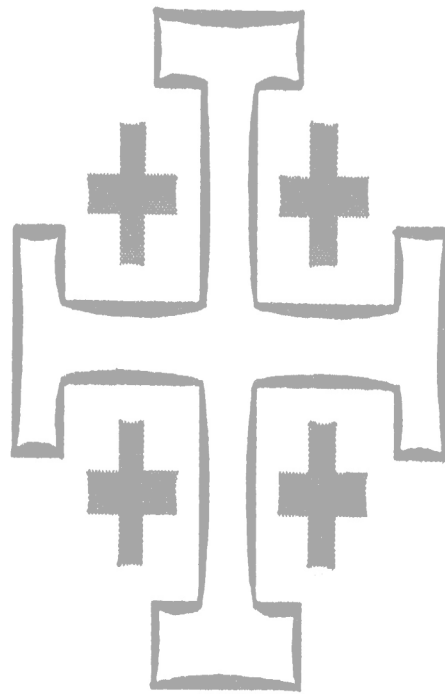


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
RALEIGH, NC

ORGANIZED MARCH 8, 1812



February 17, 2021

THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP
ASH WEDNESDAY

February 17, 2021

Six thirty o'clock

The Prelude

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"
Sue Crocker, piano

arr. Thomas Keesecker

Ash Wednesday begins the Christian season of Lent. We will spend the coming days journeying with Jesus toward the cross; toward the death that ultimately brings resurrection life. Many of us will spend these coming days practicing a new spiritual discipline or giving up something that seems to be getting in the way of the life we long to live. And tonight, we come together to mark the beginning of this Lenten journey.

We come together to acknowledge our sin, to acknowledge our mortality. We come to glimpse the Christ who offers forgiveness, who offers everlasting life.

As part of tonight's worship, we will impose ashes on each other or ourselves. This practice may not be familiar to everyone. Ashes have been used in Christian churches to mark the beginning of Lent since at least the 10th Century, and ashes are mentioned in scripture as a symbol of purification and repentance. We impose ashes tonight as a physical reminder of our mortality and sin; an assurance of God's forgiveness and salvation.

The Call to Worship (responsive)

Joel 2:1, 12-14

Leah Reed

LEADER: Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

PEOPLE: **Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—**

LEADER: Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

PEOPLE: **Rend your hearts and not your garments.**

LEADER: Return to the Lord, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

PEOPLE: **Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God?**

The Invocation

1. Lord, who through-out these for - ty days for us did fast and pray,
 2. As you with Sa - tan did con-tend, and did the vic - tory win,
 3. As you did hun - ger and did thirst, so teach us, gra - cious Lord,
 4. And thro' these days of pen - i - tence, and thro' your Pas - sion-tide,
 5. A - bide with us, that through this life of doubts and hope and pain,

teach us with you to mourn our sins and close by you to stay.
 O give us strength in you to fight, in you to con-quer sin.
 to die to self, and so to live by your most ho - ly Word.
 for - ev - er - more, in life and death, O Lord, with us a - bide.
 an Eas - ter of un - end - ing joy we may at last at - tain!

The Call to Confession

Lynn Lingafelt

The Prayer of Confession and Assurance (responsive)

LEADER: As darkness falls, as silence enfolds us, we come to you, O God. Lord, hear our prayer.

PEOPLE: **Be merciful to us, for we have sinned.**

LEADER: Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. (*Isaiah 58:1-3*)

PEOPLE: **As darkness falls, as silence enfolds us we come to you, O God. Lord, hear our prayer.**

LEADER: We have not delighted in your ways. We have turned our backs on your laws, we have sought out only our selfish desires. We have not loved you, O God.

PEOPLE: **Be merciful to us, for we have sinned.**

(Silence)

LEADER: "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? (Isaiah 58:3-7)

PEOPLE: **As darkness falls, as silence enfolds us we come to you, O God. Lord, hear our prayer.**

LEADER: We have not done justice or sought to be kind. We have turned our backs on the poor, the needy, the homeless, the sick, the oppressed. We have not loved our neighbors as our selves. We have not been Christ to the world. We have not loved you, O God.

PEOPLE: **Be merciful to us, for we have sinned.**

(Silence)

LEADER: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and God will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. (Isaiah 58:8-10)

Know that God has heard our prayers and the confession of our sins. Be comforted for God forgives us all our sins and takes us back and makes us whole. Thanks be to God!

The Act of Praise

"Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy"

ARISE

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the hymn: "I will a-rise and go to Je - sus; he will em-brace me in his arms;". The second staff contains the melody for the second line: "in the arms of my dear Sav - ior, O, there are ten thou - sand charms." The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

²⁰We 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.

¹As 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.

LEADER: This is the Word of the Lord.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God**

The Gospel

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

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.

LEADER: This is the Gospel of Christ.

PEOPLE: **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

The Musical Meditation

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”
Tonya Carter, Stan Crocker, Dennis Ellis, Diane Ellis

Traditional

The Homily

“What Might We Take On?”

Christopher Chapman

The Prayer of Response (responsive)

LEADER: Ashes are a symbol of purification. As a fire burns, it can separate what is valuable from what is valueless, just as an assayer's fire can separate a base metal from one that is precious. In this same way, these ashes are pure. They are a symbol of the new space that is now present within us for a new life. Let us claim the new life Jesus offers by praying to our God:

PEOPLE: **God of love and mercy, we come to you in prayer, seeking to change our hearts and minds. We confess the baggage of idols, bitterness, and self-concern that we so often drag along with us, struggling under its weight all the while we attempt to follow Christ. Cleanse us from our attachment to these old things. Burn away their power in us and purify our hearts. In place of old ways fill us with the new fire of your Holy Spirit. Open up new opportunities for us to follow Jesus in loving you and our neighbors. In Jesus' name we ask these things. Amen.**

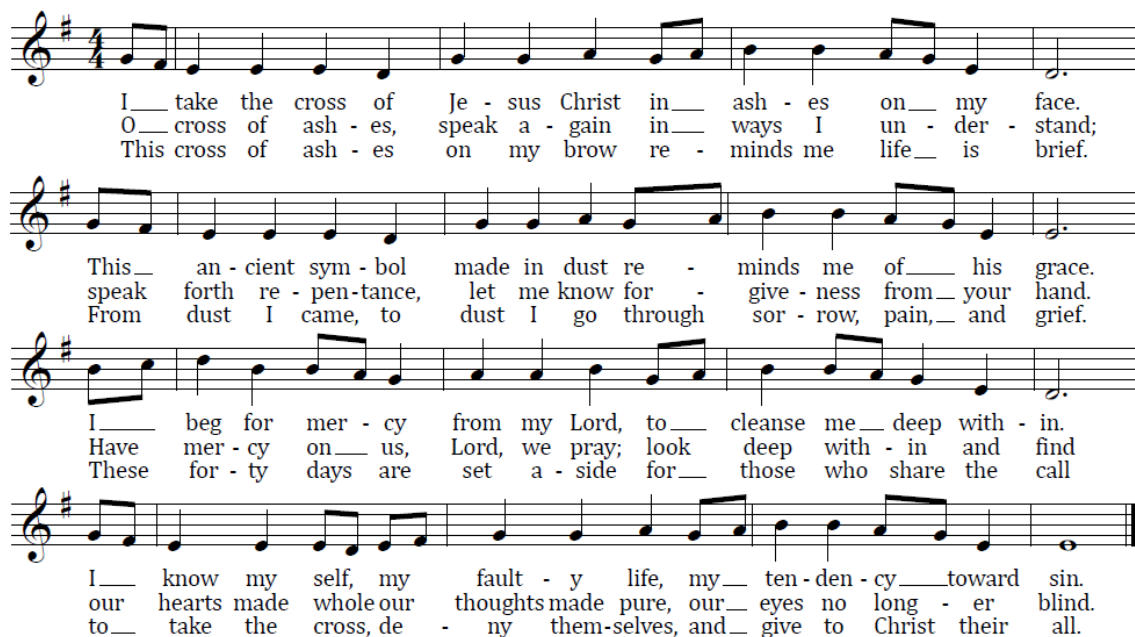
The Imposition of Ashes

Tonight we impose ashes in the shape of a cross as we speak the words, "From dust you have come, to dust you will return." The ashes offer a sign of our sinfulness and mortality. That they are imposed in the shape of a cross offers hope for God's gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

The Hymn

"I Take the Cross of Jesus Christ"

KINGSFOLD



I take the cross of Je - sus Christ in ash - es on my face.
O cross of ash - es, speak a - gain in ways I un - der - stand;
This cross of ash - es on my brow re - minds me life is brief.

This an - cient sym - bol made in dust re - minds me of his grace.
speak forth re - pen - tance, let me know for - give - ness from your hand.
From dust I came, to dust I go through sor - row, pain, and grief.

I beg for mer - cy from my Lord, to cleanse me deep with - in.
Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray; look deep with - in and find
These for - ty days are set a - side for those who share the call

I know my self, my fault - y life, my ten - den - cy toward sin.
our hearts made whole our thoughts made pure, our eyes no long - er blind.
to take the cross, de - ny them - selves, and give to Christ their all.

The Benediction (responsive)

LEADER: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation that we may show forth the transformative power of your love.

PEOPLE: **By the life and death and transformation of Jesus Christ, bring our minds and hearts to such a depth of understanding that we, too, accept the full promise and challenge of your love.**

LEADER: Our loving Creator does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their distorted lives and live.

PEOPLE: **Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance that those things which we do this day may be pleasing to God, that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, and that at the last we may come to God's eternal joy; through Jesus Christ.**

LEADER: Thanks be to God! Go in peace. Amen.

The Postlude

“All Now Living are but Mortal”
Sue Crocker, organ

Johann Pachelbel

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