



ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22, 2023

6:30 p.m.

The Prelude

Maureen Howell

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, the imposition of ashes will be offered. 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 offer the imposition of 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

*The Hymn, 200

“Lord, Who Throughout”

LAND OF REST

The Call to Confession

Michael Hood

The Prayer of Confession (unison)

Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.

**We have many treasures on earth that we hold too dearly;
that we withhold from others in need.**

**When we sin against neighbor, condone injustice,
and quarrel with one another, we sin against you.**

Forgive us, we pray, for we are broken in spirit.

Do not see us for our faults, and do not go away from us.

Keep us always in your presence

so that we may be restored to the joy of your salvation.

**Sustain in us a willing spirit to treasure what you desire;
then our hearts will be opened in joy and gladness.**

In Jesus Christ, our Treasure, we pray. Amen.

The Silent Confession



I will a-rise and go to Je - sus; he will em-brace me in his arms;



in the arms of my dear Sav - ior, O, there are ten thou - sand charms.

The Assurance of Pardon (responsive)

LEADER: The truth is this: God’s love and mercy are never-ending. God knows us in our inward being; God cleanses us from our sins and shortcomings, and restores to us the joy of salvation.

PEOPLE: **Thanks be to God!**

The Hebrew Bible

Isaiah 58:1-12

Lynn Lingafelt

The Christian Testament

2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

*The Hymn, 441

“Softly and Tenderly”

THOMPSON

The Gospel

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

The Homily

“More Than Bad-Tasting Medicine”

Christopher Chapman

The Invitation to Lenten Discipline (responsive)

LEADER: Friends in Christ, every year at the time of the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin this holy season by remembering our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PEOPLE: **We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, an ancient sign, that speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community.**

LEADER: I invite you therefore, in the name of the Lord, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the word of God. Let us bow before our creator and redeemer.

PEOPLE: **Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so we may remember that only by your gracious gift do we experience everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.**

ALL: **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 of Devotion 543

“Christ Beside Me”

BUNESSAN

*The Benediction

*The Postlude

Maureen Howell

*Those who are able are invited to stand.

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