

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!



*Ash*  
WEDNESDAY

Rethinking Our Priorities  
*Ash Wednesday*

# St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church | Wisconsin Rapids, WI

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February 14, 2024



## Welcome To Worship

If you are a visitor to our church, we extend you a warm welcome. We are happy you are here. Please fill out a Connect Card to let us know how we might continue to serve you.

It's encouraging to see parents bring their families to worship the Lord. If your child becomes restless, you can use the Family Room to calm them. Quiet bags and children's bulletins are also available to keep little ones busy. Restrooms are located in the hallways along either side of the worship space. For those with special needs, large print copies of the service folder and listening devices are available from the ushers. One of our ushers can help you find the restrooms or family room and answer any other questions.

## Service Notes For This Service

That potential promotion at work. The third date, which will signal if there is real potential in this relationship. The test this Friday, which will determine if you make honor roll or not. The game on Sunday with the playoffs on the line. So many things that compete for our attention! It's easy to think of religion as just another of many activities to cram into our schedules. Sometimes, perhaps, the schedule is just too crowded.



So, Jesus lovingly whispers into our ear, "Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust." Those are the words spoken as a dead body is planted in the ground. The reality is that our time in this world is so short. After comes eternity, spent in one of two very different places. Jesus wants us to grasp that somber truth so we rethink where he should fall among all our priorities. Death can come at any time. So now is the time to cling to Christ in true repentance. Not later. Now. There is no higher priority.

Today's service includes a celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. For personal preparation, consider using the Questions for Examination on page 8 of this service folder or Christian Questions on page 295 of the blue hymnal.

## Those Serving in Worship

Pastor Lucas Proeber; Accompanist Kristi Perry; Church Choir

## Acknowledgements

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# Ash Wednesday Confessional Rite

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## Welcome

### Psalm

51D God, Be Merciful to Me, v. 1-4



1 God, be mer - ci - ful to me, on your grace I  
2 My trans - gres - sions I con - fess, grief and guilt my  
3 I am e - vil, born in sin; you de - sire all  
4 Bro - ken, hum - bled to the dust by your wrath and



rest my plea; your com - pas - sions o - ver - flow,  
soul op - press; I have sinned a - gainst your grace  
truth with - in. You a - lone my Sav - ior are,  
judg - ment just, let my con - trite heart re - joice



blot out my trans - gres - sions now; wash me, make me  
and pro - voked you to your face; I con - fess your  
teach your wis - dom to my heart; make me pure, your  
and in glad - ness hear your voice; from my sins, O



pure with - in, cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.  
judg - ment just, speech - less, in your mer - cy trust.  
grace be - stow, wash me whit - er than the snow.  
hide your face, blot them out in bound - less grace.

Text: Psalter, 1912, alt.. Tune: Richard Redhead. Text and tune: Public domain

## Remembrance of Baptism

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God created us to know joy in fellowship with him, to love all people, and to live in harmony with all creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us.

By our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live. Therefore, God in his mercy has sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take our place under the law, to suffer for us, and to die the death we deserve. God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

During the forty days of Lent, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. The time of Lent reminds us that to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, we must also know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor.

Let us confess our sins, ask our Father for forgiveness, and commit ourselves to this struggle.

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

## **Confession**

Most holy and merciful Father,  
**we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault,  
by our own 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, Lord.**

We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us.  
We have not been true to the mind of Christ.  
We have grieved the Holy Spirit.  
**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We have placed our wants before your will.  
We have gratified the desires of our sinful nature.  
We have merited your punishment now and forever.  
**Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness.  
The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives  
**we confess to you, O Lord.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our manipulation of other people, our anger when our selfish aims are denied, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves  
**we confess to you, O Lord.**

Our love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, our negligence in worship and prayer, and our failure to show the faith that is in us  
**we confess to you, O Lord.**

Forgive us, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,  
**forgive us, Lord.**

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward others, and for our prejudice and contempt for those who differ from us,  
**forgive us, Lord.**

For what we think or say or do that is at variance with your will,  
**forgive us, Lord.**

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.  
**Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great.**

## **Imposition of Ashes**

*At the direction of the ushers, those who desire to receive the sign of ashes may come forward. All are welcome—member and visitor, young and old—but ashes are not necessary for true repentance, which is purely a matter of the heart. Ashes are simply a sign that has historically been used to show sorrow over sin. The pastors will apply ashes in the form of a small cross on the forehead or on the back of either hand. As he applies the ashes, the pastor will say:*

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

*Once all who desire ashes have received them, the service continues as follows:*

Accomplish in us, Lord, the work of your salvation  
**that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

By the cross and suffering of your Son,  
**bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. He sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

During these days of Lent, let us implore God to give us renewal and his Holy Spirit. May we continue to abide in the true faith and at the last be received by him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Psalm**

*51D God, Be Merciful to Me*

- 5 Gracious God, my heart renew, make my spirit right and true;  
let me not abandoned be, let your Spirit dwell in me;  
your salvation's joy impart, steadfast make my willing heart.**
- 6 Sinners then shall learn from me and to God restored shall be;  
Savior, all my guilt remove, and my tongue shall sing your love;  
touch my silent lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall praise accord.**

Text: Psalter, 1912, alt.. Text: Public domain

## **The Word**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

## **Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

Almighty and merciful God, you never despise what you have made and always forgive those who turn to you. Create in us such new and contrite hearts that we may truly repent of our sins and obtain your full and gracious pardon; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

## **First Reading**

*Joel 2:12–19*

*Our top priority is to return to the LORD in repentance; whenever we do, we find grace and compassion.*

<sup>12</sup> Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and grief. <sup>13</sup> Tear your heart and not your clothing. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, and he relents from sending disaster. <sup>14</sup> Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

<sup>15</sup> Blow the ram's horn in Zion. Set aside a day for fasting. Call a solemn convocation. <sup>16</sup> Gather the people. Consecrate the assembly. Bring together the elders. Gather the children, even those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

<sup>17</sup> Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say: Have compassion on your people, O LORD. Do not subject the inheritance you have given us to the scorn of the nations. Do not make us notorious among the nations as an object of ridicule. Why should they say among the peoples, “Where is their God?”

<sup>18</sup> The LORD is zealous for his land, and he will take pity on his people. <sup>19</sup> The LORD will respond to them: I am sending you grain, new wine, and fresh oil, enough to satisfy you fully. Never again will I subject you to scorn among the nations. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Choir Anthem

*Lamb of God*

## Second Reading

*Revelation 3:1–3*

*The message to Sardis is for us, too: Wake up, repent, and remember that God is gracious.*

<sup>1</sup> To the messenger of the church in Sardis write:

The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says this:

I know your works. You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup> Wake up, and strengthen what is left, which is about to die, for I have found that your works are not complete in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup> Therefore remember what you received and heard. Hold on to it and repent! If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come upon you. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

## Gospel

*Luke 12:13–21*

*A man with misguided priorities pays the ultimate price.*

<sup>13</sup> Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” <sup>14</sup> But Jesus said to him, “Man, who appointed me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

<sup>15</sup> Then he said to them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because a man’s life is not measured by how many possessions he has.”

<sup>16</sup> He told them a parable: “The land of a certain rich man produced very well. <sup>17</sup> He was thinking to himself, ‘What will I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup> He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will tell my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry.’”

<sup>20</sup> “But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?’

<sup>21</sup>“That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (EHV®)

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

*Be seated*

## Hymn of the Day

*650 From Depths of Woe, Lord God, I Cry*

## Sermon

**God’s Ancient—Yet Timeless—Guide to Repentance**

*Stand*

## The Fifth Petition

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

What does this mean?

**We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.**

**So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.**

*Be seated*

## Connect Card and Offering

*Please take a moment to fill out a Connect Card. After a few moments, the ushers will come forward to collect the offering. You may place your Connect Card and any offering you brought in the plate as it is passed. Moved by God’s love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him. If the gospel message has moved you to give and you would like an electronic option, you can scan this QR code with your mobile phone. It will connect you with our website’s giving page.*



### Questions for Examination

- † Do I believe that I am a sinner in need of forgiveness?
- † Do I believe that Jesus died on the cross to win forgiveness for me?
- † Do I believe that Jesus offers his true body and blood with the bread and wine in this sacrament?
- † Do I believe this sacrament strengthens my faith and strengthens me to live a God-pleasing life?
- † Am I a member of a church that belongs to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) or Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)?
- † If you answered “no” to any of these questions, please hold off on communing with us today. Following worship, one of the pastors would be happy to explain why we ask you to do this.

Stand

## Preface

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

## Proper Preface

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who brought the gift of salvation to all people by his death on the tree of the cross so that the devil, who overcame us by a tree, would in turn by a tree be overcome. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

## Holy, Holy, Holy

to the tune of "O Light of Gentile Nations"

Tune: MUNICH



1 Sing, "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts on high,  
2 Ho - san-na in the high - est! How blest is Christ our King,



your ev - er - last - ing glo - ry fills earth and sea and sky."  
who died as our Re - deem - er, e - ter - nal life to bring!



Our voic - es cry, "Ho - san - na!" Lord, hear our hum - ble plea:  
How blest are you, Lord Je - sus, now com - ing in God's name!



in mer - cy, come and save us; in love, come set us free.  
"Ho - san - na in the high - est!" our grate - ful hearts pro - claim.

Text: Michael D. Schultz. Tune: Neu-vermehrtes . . . Gesangbuch, 3rd ed., Meiningen, 1693. Text: © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 719903. Tune: Public domain

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give thanks to you, O God, through your dear Son, Jesus Christ, whom you sent to be our Savior, our Redeemer, and the messenger of your grace. Through him you made all things; in him you are well pleased. He is the incarnate Word, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. To fulfill your promises, he stretched out his hands on the cross and released from eternal death all who believe in you. As we remember Jesus' death and resurrection, we thank you that you have gathered us together to receive your Son's body and blood. Send us your Spirit, unite us as one, and strengthen our faith so that we may praise you in your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, we glorify and honor you, O God our Father, with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## Lord's Prayer

**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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

## Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my **T** body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my **T** blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**Amen.**

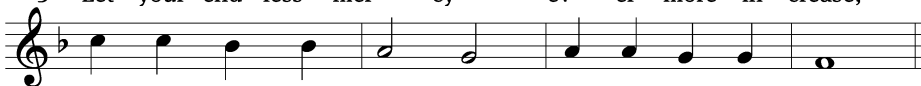
## O Christ, Lamb of God

*Tune: WEM IN LEIDENSTAGEN*

*to the tune of "Glory Be to Jesus"*



- 1 Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, Christ, who takes a - way
- 2 Je - sus, in your mer - cy, make us pure with - in;
- 3 Let your end - less mer - cy ev - er - more in - crease;



all the world's trans - gres - sions, lis - ten as we pray:  
cleanse us by your per - fect sac - ri - fice for sin.  
com - fort us with par - don, calm us with your peace.

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Be seated

## Distribution

### Distribution Hymn

670 I Come, O Savior, to Your Table

Stand

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this saving gift. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and  $\text{T}$  give you peace.

**Amen.**

Be seated

### Hymn

405 On My Heart Imprint Your Image

On my heart im - print your im - age, bless - ed Je - sus, King of grace,  
that life's rich - es, cares, and plea - sures have no pow'r to hide your face.  
Let the clear in - scrip - tion be: Je - sus, cru - ci - fied for me,  
is my life, my hope's foun - da - tion, and my glo - ry and sal - va - tion.

Text: tr. Peer O. Strömme, 1856–1921, alt.; Thomas H. Kingo, 1634–1703, abr.. Tune: Johann B. König, 1691–1758. Text and tune: Public domain

## Why Is It Called Ash Wednesday?



Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday is an ancient ritual of the church that employs a symbol long associated with the contrition aspect of confession. God spoke these words to Adam soon after the fall into sin: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.” Job connected sorrow over sin to this symbol when he lamented, “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Daniel understood he had no right to come before a holy God with pleas for deliverance. “So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.” Jesus attached the same meaning to the symbol: “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

Ashes also connote purification. When Peter wrote “These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed,” he painted a picture in which faith is strengthened as the fire of trials burns away the impure ash of the sinful nature.

While, historically speaking, only Catholics and some Anglicans have been known to wear ashes, Lutherans have begun to attempt to “reclaim” the custom while leaving behind the burden of penance.

Like all symbols, the Imposition of Ashes is a servant of gospel ministry. It has value only in so far as it recalls and enables a deeper understanding of a spiritual truth. God has little interest in ashes; he is concerned with a contrite and repentant heart. For some, ashes will have little impact on their Lenten contrition. For others, however, the ashes imposed on Ash Wednesday may be a powerful reminder of the sorrow over sin that always precedes lifting our eyes to Jesus in faith.

Above all, we demonstrate Christian love in our practices. We do not make judgments on anyone based on their participation in the Imposition of Ashes. In love, we try to understand the perspective of those who either appreciate or struggle with new forms of worship. Think of the “more excellent way” Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13—love your God and love your neighbor—in whatever way you find to be pleasing and glorifying to our Savior.