

A Service of Worship
February 22, 2023
Ash Wednesday

We Gather at God's Call

We Gather in Silence

Prelude The Reverend Sarah Speed/A Sanctified Art LLC/sanctifiedart.org

Is this the fast that I choose?

Will I wake with the sun each morning?

Will I start with thank you?

Will I peel back the cage around my frame to let you in - or will I get too busy?

Will my Bible collect dust on the shelf,

along with my journal,

along with my sense of self,

or will I roll back the stone and wade in?

Every new season beckons something of us -

attention, beauty, the chance to create.

This season is no different.

So, like moths to the light,

will we find our way toward God,

or will we hover, circling fake sons?

I am seeking something deeper.

I am kicking off my shoes.

I am starting this season on holy ground.

Call to worship (Psalm 51:10-12, 15)

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence,

and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

and sustain in me a willing spirit.

O Lord, open my lips,

and my mouth will declare your praise.

Opening Prayer

Merciful God,

you called us forth from the dust of the earth;

you claimed us for Christ in the waters of baptism.

Look upon us as we enter these forty days bearing the mark of ashes,

and bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the font of rebirth.

May our fasting be the hunger for justice;

our alms, a making of peace;
our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts.
All that we do and pray is in the name of Jesus,
for in his cross you proclaim your love for ever and ever. Amen.

*Hymn

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

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*When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.*

*See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Isaiah 58:1-12

Silence for Reflection

Is this the Fast that I Choose?

Guiding Questions:

What are you seeking?

In your spirit...in your body...in our congregation?

What are the people seeking in this Isaiah passage?

What is God seeking?

Where does our seeking overlap God's seeking?

Where is there discord with what God seeks?

*Hymn

Sign Us with Ashes (vv. 1, 4, 5)

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Refrain:

*Sign us with ashes, merciful God,
children of dust, as to dust we return.
Sign us with ashes, merciful God.*

Mark us and make us your own.

*Surely, you alone can free us.
You break the bonds of guilt and sin.
Bracing, till we walk uprightly,
you bolster our hope once again. (Refrain)*

*Surely, you alone refine us.
You give us grace for lives made new,
forging, through your fire and radiance,
a sacrifice worthy for you. (Refrain)*

Litany of Penitence

Holy God, we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned, by our own fault, in our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have not loved you or our neighbors with our whole hearts.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have failed to do justice and to love mercy and to live humbly.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have left many things undone that would bring justice and equality to the human community.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have despoiled the natural world that you created in beauty and rich diversity.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We continually store up possessions as earthly treasure and neglect the true treasure that you offer.

Have mercy on us, O God.

With honesty, we confess our pride, our envy of others, our anger, our self-indulgence, our contempt for those who differ from us.

Have mercy on us, O God.

So we begin a journey through the wilderness of Lent with the marks of our human brokenness upon us. Accompany us on the way; forgive us as we stumble; encourage us as we learn the way of discipleship; bring us safely to the cross and the empty tomb. Restore us to wholeness, and embrace us in your steadfast love.

Turn to us in your mercy, O God, and redeem us. Amen.

Prayers and Imposition of Ashes

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, calls us to heartfelt repentance, and urges us to place our hope in God alone.

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes remind us of our mortality and penitence and teach us again that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

(Any who would like to receive the imposition of ashes in the form of a cross are invited to come to the front at this time. As the ashes are imposed, the words of Genesis 3:19 are spoken: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.")

*Closing Prayer (*responsively*)

Gracious God, who calls us to journey through the wilderness, we step forward with courage, called to walk in the way of Christ.

May we walk in humility and courage, as did Abraham when he prepared to sacrifice his son;

In honesty, as did the Samaritan woman when Jesus challenged her at the well,

In fortitude, as did Jesus when confronted by the Tempter.

As we experience our internal and individual repentance, may we also repent of the brokenness we have caused beyond ourselves and the inequities we have turned away from.

Give us compassion for the grief and disaster that others experience and lead us to be healers even as we ourselves are healed.

And, after our forty days of reflection, repentance, and mourning, when we come at dawn to the Easter garden, may we know the true joy of Resurrection morning.

Amen.

*Sending