

Ash Wednesday Service March 6, 2019 7:00 pm

Reflection in Preparation: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:1-2

WELCOME *Pastor Ed*

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP based on Joel 2:12-14 Pastor Donna

L: Behold, now is the acceptable time. Today is the day of God's salvation.

P: We tremble in fear and anticipation at the nearness of a God so great and powerful.

L: Return with all your heart, with weeping, fasting, and mourning.

P: God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

L: Be reconciled to God, through Christ Jesus, and receive a new and right spirit within you.

P: We will seek God and pray as expressions of inner discipline and love for God, preparing ourselves for faithful discipleship.

L: May the peace of God be with you.

P: And also with you. Amen.

[HYMN #486 "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy"](#)

CALL TO CONFESSION Pastor Donna

The prophet Joel cried out in Joel 2:12-13, "Return to the Lord with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. For God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." Let us confess our sins and repent of all unrighteousness.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION Pastor Donna

Forgive us O God, for our blindness which is not even aware that it is sinning; Forgive us for our pride which cannot admit that it is wrong; From our self-will, which can see nothing but its own way; Forgive our self-righteousness, when we see no flaw within us; Forgive our callousness, which has sinned so often that it has ceased to care. Forgive our defiance that seeks to blame others for our faults; Forgive our hearts that are so hardened that we cannot forgive others even though you have forgiven us. Father, give us at all times, eyes which are open to our faults; A conscience which is sensitive and quick to warn; A heart that cannot sin in peace, but is moved to regret and remorse. Grant that being truly penitent we may be truly forgiven, so that we may find that your love is great enough to cover all of his sin; through and In Jesus' name, hear us as we silently confess those areas where we have sinned... *(time of silence)*.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS: Pastor Donna

Psalm 103:8-12 "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

¹ "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁵ "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

¹⁶ "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

SERMONETTE Where Is Your Heart? Pastor Anita

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE WITH LORD'S PRAYER Pastor Donna

BLESSINGS OF THE ASHES Pastor Ed

May these ashes be to us, an acknowledgement of our wrongdoing and our acceptance of your forgiveness. In these ashes are the wrongs we have held in secret, our impatience, the times we have turned our backs on the suffering of others, our neglect of all you have asked us to do, our indifference, pride, our willfulness, materialism, hypocrisy, envy, all of our sins. In these ashes of repentance are the seeds of our forgiveness and our transformation. For God always accepts us and forgives us. Through our repentance and forgiveness comes transformation. May God create within each of us a clean heart and a new and right spirit. Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

PRESENTATION OF OFFERINGS / Call to Financial Stewardship / Offertory / Thanksgiving & Dedication

[HYMN #596 "I Surrender All"](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHALLENGE: Practice your piety not before others, but before God. Give generously as the Lord instructs; pray constantly, but confidently; fast with gratitude to God; and store up that which is in your heart for it cannot be taken from you. Love and serve God knowing that the time is now!

BENEDICTION: The blessing of God, who hears you when you call; the grace of Christ, who reconciles you; the power of the Holy Spirit, who sustains you; remain with you in these Lenten days, and forevermore.

Talking Points: Where is Your Heart?

Good evening. Our scripture from Matthew this evening is tethered closely to the Joel 2:12 "Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;"

God is consistently calling humanity to come closer to him. To turn from our sinfulness and to turn ourselves to God.

Lent that season that includes the celebration of Easter, the high holiest of Christian holidays,

Easter with its promise of newness and new life in Christ. The celebration of our Glorious Lord who has overcome all that would keep us from eternal life with God in heaven and all the joys that life in Christ can bring as we live upon this earth. Easter with its triumphant empty tomb. But Lent or the 40 days prior to Easter starts with this evening Ash Wednesday.

This Ashes from this evening remind us of Genesis where scripture tells us that we, all of us are but mere ashes. In the account after the fall, where God tells Adam and Eve because of their disobedience, Life will not be as God had planned it for them, but there would be hard work and woe and in Genesis 3:19 God speaks and says "Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

The season of Lent begins with a reminder, and a question.

The reminder that this life in these physical bodies all have a definite end. These bodies will turn to dust. And the number of days to these bodies is short. That's the reminder of Lent.

The question posed to each of us during this Lenten period is the one framed by our scripture in Matthew.

Lent seeks to strip us down, remove distractions in our lives, and helps us focus our attentions on what really matters in our lives – the very condition of our souls. Or, to put it in the words of Jesus at the end of our text this evening, where is your heart's treasure? Or Christian, where is your heart?

What is your treasure?

One commentator notes that: "Treasure is defined by being a focus of attention, energy, imagination, and resourcefulness. While we often think of the treasures that Jesus warns against as material goods, "treasures upon the earth" is probably a wider category, encompassing not only physical possessions but such values as success, security, happiness, or even life itself" [Stanley P. Saunders, "Exegetical Perspective: Matthew 6:19-21," *Feasting on the Gospels, Matthew, Volume 1, Chapters 1-13*, Cynthia A. Jarvis and E. Elizabeth Johnson, editors, \(Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013\).](#)

Lent asks us to question which of these "treasures" may be getting in the way of what is really important. That which our hearts should really treasure...A right relationship with God.

The reminder: Life is so short. Lent is that time to pause and take a deliberate action to get closer to God. Think of it as spring cleaning for the soul. Getting rid of the clutter of our lives to cling to what is of greatest value.

For 40 days, the goal before us is am I moving closer to God. Have I spent more time with God? Doing things for God? Doing things because of God?

Often during the many day journey to Easter, many of us will deny ourselves something meaningful, but Matthew warns us that we must always keep it about God. Matthew 6:21 "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them."

In other words, our journey towards God must be guarded by our natural inclination to make things about us. We have to be careful not to seek the pat on the back, but to be rewarded by the drawing in and abiding with the Father.

The Matthew passage includes four things that we should watch out for in our journey to get closer to God.

- (1) Our desire to be seen by others Mt 6:1
- (2) Our desire to be heard by others Mt 6:5
- (3) Our desire to be praised by others Mt 6:18
- (4) Our desire to accumulate Mt 6:20

In this way, our journey to God through Lent humbles us so that we are prepared to receive the heart of God.

The Psalmist declares in Psalm 51:10-12 "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.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-21 "We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

The reminder of Ash Wednesday, life is short and we are but dust in the wind. It is that part of us that is eternal, our spirits that we must continually prepare for a life of fruitfulness and fulfillment with God.

The question of Ash Wednesday: Life is short Christian; where is your treasure?

In Jesus' Name, Amen.