



ASH

WEDNESDAY

ASH WEDNESDAY
The First Day of Lent



February 18, 2026

Ash Wednesday is a solemn day beginning our Lenten journey with Jesus to the cross. On this day we hear the call to submit ourselves to Lent's discipline, trusting that it will lead us to growth in faith and love. Lent's seven weeks include intense reflection upon the suffering and death of Christ and lead us to hear his words afresh. The sermons for this year's midweek Lenten services are based on the hymn "O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High," a hymn that beautifully proclaims God's love shown in Christ and given "for us." May God bless our worship and prayer, both this evening and throughout the season.

PRELUDE

Savior, When in Dust to Thee
Setting: Sam Eatherton

ENTRANCE HYMN

Savior, When in Dust to Thee

LSB 419

- 1 Savior, when in dust to Thee**
Low we bow the_adoring knee;
When, repentant, to the skies
Scarce we lift our weeping eyes;
O, by all Thy pains and woe
Suffered once for us below,
Bending from Thy throne on high,
Hear our penitential cry!
- 2 By Thy helpless infant years,**
By Thy life of want and tears,
By Thy days of deep distress
In the savage wilderness,
By the dread, mysterious hour
Of the_insulting tempter's pow'r,
Turn, O turn a fav'ring eye;
Hear our penitential cry!

- 3 By Thine hour of dire despair,
By Thine agony of prayer,
By the cross, the nail, the thorn,
Piercing spear, and torturing scorn,
By the gloom that veiled the skies
O'er the dreadful sacrifice,
Listen to our humble sigh;
Hear our penitential cry!
- 4 By Thy deep expiring groan,
By the sad sepulchral stone,
By the vault whose dark abode
Held in vain the rising God,
O, from earth to heav'n restored,
Mighty, reascended Lord,
Bending from Thy throne on high,
Hear our penitential cry!

ADDRESS TO WORSHIPERS

Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the Church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope. Let us pray that our dear Father in heaven, for the sake of His beloved Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit, might richly bless this Lententide for us so that we may come to Easter with glad hearts and keep the feast in sincerity and truth.

LITANY (Kneel)

O Lord,
have mercy.

O Christ,
have mercy.

O Lord,
have mercy.

O Christ,
hear us.

God the Father, in heaven,
have mercy.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
have mercy.

God the Holy Spirit,
have mercy.

Be gracious to us.
Spare us, good Lord.

Be gracious to us.
Help us, good Lord.

By the mystery of Your holy incarnation;
by Your holy nativity;
by Your baptism, fasting, and temptation;
by Your agony and bloody sweat;
by Your cross and Passion;
by Your precious death and burial;
by Your glorious resurrection and ascension;
and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:
Help us, good Lord.

In all time of our tribulation;
in all time of our prosperity;
in the hour of death;
and in the day of judgment:
Help us, good Lord.

We poor sinners implore You
to hear us, O Lord.

To prosper the preaching of Your Word;
to bless our prayer and meditation;
to strengthen and preserve us in the true faith;
to give heart to our sorrow and strength to our repentance:
We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

To draw all to Yourself;
to bless those who are instructed in the faith;
to watch over and console the poor, the sick, the distressed,
the lonely, the forsaken, the abandoned, and all who stand in
need of our prayers; to give abundant blessing to all works of
mercy; and to have mercy on us all:

We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

To turn our hearts to You;
to turn the hearts of our enemies, persecutors, and
slanderers; and graciously to hear our prayers:

We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
we implore You to hear us.

Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
have mercy.

Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
have mercy.

Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
grant us Your peace.

O Christ,
hear us.

O Lord,
have mercy.

O Christ,
have mercy.

O Lord,
have mercy. Amen.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES (Be seated)

*Those wishing to receive ashes on their forehead as an acknowledgement
of mortality and need for repentance may come forward at this time.*

Psalms 51 may also be read.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Stand)

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of Your salvation,
that we may show forth Your glory in the world.

By the cross and Passion of Your Son, our Lord,
bring us with all Your saints to the joy of His resurrection.

O God, You desire not the death of sinners, but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. We implore You to have compassion on the frailty of our mortal nature, for we acknowledge that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Mercifully pardon our sins that we may obtain the promises You have laid up for those who are repentant; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.

HOLY ABSOLUTION

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- 1 **Jesus sinners doth receive;
 Oh, may all this saying ponder
 Who in sin's delusions live
 And from God and heaven wander!
 Here is hope for all who grieve:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.**
- 2 **We deserve but grief and shame,
 Yet His words, rich grace revealing,
 Pardon, peace, and life proclaim;
 Here our ills have perfect healing.
 Firmly in these words believe:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.**
- 3 **Sheep that from the fold did stray
 No true shepherd e'er forsaketh;
 Weary souls that lost their way
 Christ, the Shepherd, gently taketh
 In His arms that they may live:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.**
- 4 **I, a sinner, come to Thee
 With a penitent confession.
 Savior, mercy show to me;
 Grant for all my sins remission.
 Let these words my soul relieve:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.**
- 5 **Oh, how blest it is to know:
 Were as scarlet my transgression,
 It shall be as white as snow
 By Thy blood and bitter passion;
 For these words I now believe:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God,

You hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who truly repent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that we may obtain from you, the God of all mercies, full pardon and forgiveness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



SERVICE OF THE WORD

FIRST READING (Be seated)

Joel 2:12–19

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
and rend your hearts and not your garments.”
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.
Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD your God?
Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
gather the people.
Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,

and the bride her chamber.
Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep
and say, "Spare your people, O LORD,
and make not your heritage a reproach,
a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD became jealous for his land
and had pity on his people.
The LORD answered and said to his people,
"Behold, I am sending to you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a reproach among the nations."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM Jubilation Choir Christ, Mighty Savior LSB 881 Sts.1, 2, 4, 5

- 1 Christ, mighty Savior, Light of all creation,
You make the daytime radiant with the sunlight
And to the night give glittering adornment,
Stars in the heavens.
- 2 Now comes the day's end as the sun is setting,
Mirror of daybreak, pledge of resurrection;
While in the heavens choirs of stars appearing
Hallow the nightfall.
- 4 Give heed, we pray You, to our supplication,
That You may grant us pardon for offenses,
Strength for our weak hearts, rest for aching bodies,
Soothing the weary.
- 5 Though bodies slumber, hearts shall keep their vigil,
Forever resting in the peace of Jesus,
In light or darkness worshipping our Savior
Now and forever.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL VERSE (Stand)

LSB 422

**On my heart imprint Your image,
Blessèd Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
Never may Your work erase;
Let the clear inscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation!**

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-15

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 6th chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your

giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when 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.

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON (Be seated)

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

As you well know, hymns are an important part of our faith. Some hymns tell a story, others teach, and still others create pictures in our minds of the great works of God. Some hymns do all three,

weaving together a tapestry that is beautiful yet simple, wondrous yet easy to understand.

The hymn *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*, which we've chosen as the basis of our Lenten midweek services this year, is that kind of hymn. Today we'll sing parts of it, right after the sermon. Over the coming Wednesdays, we'll sing it all.

The hymn was written in the fifteenth century by an unknown follower of the *Devotio moderna* or "modern devotion" movement. This movement started in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century and counted among its most notable followers Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas á Kempis – the latter of whom is often credited for writing the hymn.

Like all movements, this one impacted people from many groups and places. An organized expression of it came in the form of a monastic order for both laity and clergy called the *Brethren of the Common Life*. Martin Luther was influenced by this movement early in his career, which makes it a part of our history, too.

During the Middle Ages, many Christians prayed with an intense focus on the life of Christ. Such a focus was helpful in many ways, and still is, especially when it points us to Jesus as the one who serves, saves, and continues to give his salutary gifts.

At the same time, such a focus can also lead one to compare themselves with Jesus in an unhealthy way. For when a person sets themselves up against Jesus – their life compared to his – they always lose.

The hymn *O Love, How Deep* was originally a twenty-three-stanza poem. And this made for a very long reflection. In the nineteenth century, an Anglican cleric named Benjamin Webb translated the hymn into English and chose six of the stanzas for congregational use. A seventh stanza, a doxology, was added later to conclude it.

While the hymn extolls Christ in many excellent ways, the most pointed and personal line in the hymn is the one that is repeated

13 times. This is the simple phrase: “for us.” These words, far from being just a pithy line that is easy to repeat, are a confession of who God is and what he gives to us in his Son. The phrase tells how God did what he did so that we might be saved. And this is the same message we hear in the Nicene Creed, where it says: “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.”

The phrase “for us” also captures much of the Reformation’s theological emphasis, and Luther’s understanding of Scripture in particular. Luther, you recall, went from searching for a righteous God and finding only stern rebuke, to seeing God as the one who became one of us so that we might become like him.

Notice that this message of the incarnation – “God with us” – is found already in our hymn’s first stanza. As the hymn begins to tell of the “deep, broad and high love of God” – a line that comes from Ephesians chapter three, our second reading tonight – it mentions, as a first and greatest act of love, God’s taking on of our human flesh. The hymn leads us to marvel at the fact that “God, the Son of God, should take our mortal form for mortals’ sake!”

On this day of Ash Wednesday, we are specifically remembering our mortality. And we are remembering the reason for it too. The reason our mortality has come about – in a word – is sin, our sin. Adam and Eve were the first to sin, and every one of us since has followed in their footsteps.

In our first reading this evening, from the prophet Joel, we heard God’s call to repent of our sins. The reading tells us to return to the Lord and rend our hearts. It also tells us to consecrate a fast so that we might not forget this need.

Building on this thought, our Gospel reading reminds us that we are not to practice this righteousness to be seen by others. Jesus makes this clear as he tells us (we who are his body): “*Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*”

But keeping quiet about such things is hard to do, isn't it? We like getting credit for all the work that we do, and how can we get credit if no one knows about it?

Here we recall that God certainly sees our faithfulness. And his knowing should be enough. For Jesus tells us many times that God sees our good works and will reward them.

That being said, the more important thing for us to remember is that our good works can never save us from our sins. Only Christ can save us.

And thankfully, he has. He did this when he died on the cross to pay for our sins.

Turning to the Lord in repentance is now chiefly about acknowledging God's love and salvation. When we remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return, we are acknowledging that we need God because we are mortal and cannot save ourselves.

This love of God is not conditionally based on our good works. Nor is it a math equation that has to add up.

Instead, God's love is higher, broader, and deeper than we can ever imagine. It is, as the hymn says, "beyond all thought and fantasy."

To the Ephesians, Paul called it "*the love... that surpasses knowledge*" (v. 19). And at other times he called it "a mystery." A mystery is much different than a puzzle. With a puzzle, you figure it out and then you are done. But with a mystery, the more you come to understand, the more aware you are that you know nothing.

The mystery of the love of God penetrates to the very heart of the Christian faith. It's what makes Christianity different from other religions and what shapes us as people – inspiring us and moving us forward.

This mystery reminds us, too, that even love itself is not something to be understood. Not really. And that's because love is a gift that is ever growing, ever changing. The love of God is always moving toward us and is always for us.

We like to run around, parade our good works, and try to convince both the world and our own hearts that we are worthy of God's love. But when we do this, we're just moving in circles. No number of prayers, no fasting or outward acts of piety will ever bring us closer to God. We need a go-between. We need a bridge. We need an intermediary who will bear our grief and carry our sin. In a word, we need Jesus.

Ash Wednesday is a day to remember this. In fact, the whole season of Lent is a time to remember it.

Don't let the dust and ash on your forehead be a sign of your piety and self-righteousness. Instead, let it be a sign of what you deserve and what you would inherit apart from Jesus.

You may have noticed, over the years, that ashes placed on the face do not always wipe off so easily. And that's good in a way. For it reminds us that the more we try to rub out sins on our own, the dirtier and messier our lives become.

Thankfully, God, who is rich in mercy, has sent his Son, Jesus, to clean us up. He did this by dying for our sins and paying their price. And this Jesus has also risen from the dead so that we might be assured of our life beyond the grave.

The Passion of Christ is a mystery beyond all comprehension and a treasure beyond all value. It is a gift that only comes by grace.

So, come this day not only to receive ashes but also to receive his grace as you gather at the Lord's Table. Here you will eat and drink Christ's very body and blood and not the dust of the earth. Here you will be forgiven, again, and drawn further into the life of God for you.

The food and drink at this table is yet another mystery. But again, it is a mystery that God has given for us. In it, we are reminded that God takes on our mortal form so that we may live; and in exchange gives us his life, his works, his very self.

Oh love, how deep, how high, how broad... this is the love God gives us in Christ. It is a love which accomplishes our salvation and is available to all.

May God fill us with this love and lead us in it. Always. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN (Stand) O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High
Sts. 1, 3, 5, 7 LSB 544

**1 O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
Beyond all thought and fantasy,
That God, the Son of God, should take
Our mortal form for mortals' sake!**

**3 For us baptized, for us He bore
His holy fast and hungered sore;
For us temptation sharp He knew;
For us the tempter overthrew.**

**5 For us by wickedness betrayed,
For us, in crown of thorns arrayed,
He bore the shameful cross and death;
For us He gave His dying breath.**

**△ 7 All glory to our Lord and God
For love so deep, so high, so broad;
The Trinity whom we adore
Forever and forevermore.**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING *(Be seated)*

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. Fellowship Cards help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

PRAYERS *(Kneel)*

In peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For honorable and pure lives before God that abhor all gluttony, greed and hypocrisy; and for our fasting, that it might be a blessed chastening that reminds us that a broken and contrite spirit the Lord will not despise, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our pastors who implore us on Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God, that they would be sustained in faith and granted strength and diligence in their work; let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our families, that God would strengthen the love of husbands and wives, lead parents in the fulfilling of their duties, encourage siblings in their care for one another; and that all may be

preserved faithful to the end, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who bear office in this land, that God would give them wisdom, protect them from danger, and lead them to serve others according to His gracious will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our nation, that we may be a people that guards the rights of the weakest and most vulnerable among us, including immigrants and the unborn, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For comfort for God's people in their many and various afflictions, especially those on our prayer list and those we name in our hearts at this time... that they may be granted healing, peace, recovery, and a sure confidence that in Christ's wounds they are redeemed and made whole, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all of us who receive the Lord's Supper this day, that by God's grace and power we would return to the Lord and forsake sinful ways and thoughts, and that in receiving Christ's body and blood we would taste with joy God's abundant pardon, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

All of these things we pray in the name of our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

OFFERTORY

(for music see LSB 192/193)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.



SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

THE PREFACE (*Stand*)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father,

**who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our
daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD

LSB 198

**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the
world, have mercy upon us.**

**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the
world, have mercy upon us.**

**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the
world, grant us Thy peace. Amen.**

COMMUNION (*Be seated*)

*Those wishing to commune at the foot of the steps should come forward first.
Those wishing to commune at the altar rail should come forward after these,
front rows first, from both sides of the aisle. After receiving, all should return to
their seats. A common dismissal will be given at the end.*

- 1 **Lamb of God, pure and holy,
 Who on the cross didst suffer,
Ever patient and lowly,
 Thyself to scorn didst offer.
All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us:
 Have mercy on us, O Jesus! O Jesus!**

- 2 **Lamb of God, pure and holy,
 Who on the cross didst suffer,
Ever patient and lowly,
 Thyself to scorn didst offer.
All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us:
 Have mercy on us, O Jesus! O Jesus!**

- 3 **Lamb of God, pure and holy,
 Who on the cross didst suffer,
Ever patient and lowly,
 Thyself to scorn didst offer.
All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us:
 Thy peace be with us, O Jesus! O Jesus!**

POST COMMUNION PRAYER (Stand)

BENEDICTION

- 1 **Alas! And did my Savior bleed,
 And did my sov'reign die?
 Would He devote that sacred head
 For such a worm as I?**
- 2 **Was it for crimes that I had done
 He groaned upon the tree?
 Amazing pity, grace unknown,
 And love beyond degree!**
- 3 **Well might the sun in darkness hide
 And shut his glories in
 When God, the mighty maker, died
 For His own creatures' sin.**
- 4 **Thus might I hide my blushing face
 While His dear cross appears,
 Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
 And melt mine eyes to tears.**
- 5 **But drops of grief can ne'er repay
 The debt of love I owe;
 Here, Lord, I give myself away:
 'Tis all that I can do.**

*POSTLUDE**Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*

Setting: Robert Buckley Farlee

THOSE SERVING IN OUR MIDST:

Greeter: Steve Berg
Comm. Assist.: Dan Buuck
Reader: Dan Buuck
Acolyte: Miriam Buuck

Acknowledgments

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