**ASH WEDNESDAY (B)**

*Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles*

Wednesday 17 February 2021

*(On this day, the Presider begins the liturgy simply with the invitation.)*

**THE INVITATION**

**Presider:** Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season in the church year known as Lent. Lent is a time to prepare for the celebration of Easter and to renew our life in the mystery of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need to repent, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, a biblical symbol of mourning and lament. There is a wisdom in ash, that we need so much, but seldom hear.

It is the wisdom of grief, that reminds us of our mortality, and that Life is more than this dust can contain.

It is the wisdom of confession, that brings our darkness out of hiding, and opens the windows to Light.

It is the wisdom of repentance, that stops us in our tracks, and charts the way to Love.

The wisdom in ash speaks of the fragility of human life, and marks the commitment of the community of faith to amendment of life. I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God; beginning here and now.

**SALUTATION AND COLLECT**

**Presider:** Let us pray. Mystery of Goodness, by whose gaze we are called into being and held in life: teach us the secrecy of prayer which seeks no reward; the generosity of love which forgets itself; the gift of a treasure uncountable and unconsumed; through Jesus Christ, the Son of the Wilderness.

***People: Amen.***

*(We read from the various biblical translations authorized by our Church. During Lent we will be reading from the Revised English Version of 1881)*

**FIRST READING** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

**Reader:**  A reading from Joel. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations. Yet even now, saith the LORD, turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God, for he is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the old men, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God? The Word of the Lord.

***People: Thanks be to God.***

**RESPONSE** *(Please say together in unison)* Psalm 103

***1. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.***

***2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:***

***3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;***

***4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies:***

***5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.***

***6. The LORD executeth righteous acts, and judgments for all that are oppressed.***

***7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel.***

***8. The LORD is full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.***

***9. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever.***

***10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities.***

***11. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.***

***12. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.***

***13. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.***

***14. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.***

***15. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.***

***16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.***

***17. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;***

***18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his precepts to do them.***

***19. The LORD hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.***

***20. Bless the LORD, ye angels of his: ye mighty in strength, that fulfill his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word.***

***21. Bless the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.***

***22. Bless the LORD, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.***

**SECOND READING** 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

**Reader:**  A reading from the Second Letter to the Corinthians. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (for he saith, At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, And in a day of salvation did I succour thee: behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation): giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed; but in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. The Word of the Lord.

***People: Thanks be to God.***

**FIRST SONG –** Bless The Lord, My Soul

**GOSPEL** Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**Presider:** The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

***People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.***

**Presider:** Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also. The Gospel of the Lord.

***People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.***

**SERMON**  The Reverend M. C. Gillette

*(After the sermon, there will be a brief period of silence.)*

**SECOND SONG –** Create In Me A Clean Heart, O God

**IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

*(The Imposition of Ashes obviously cannot be done online. Hopefully you had an opportunity to receive yours during the day. But this meditation on the ritual remains important.)*

**Presider:** Our ancestors in the faith used ashes as a sign of our repentance, a symbol of the uncertainty and fragility of human life. Like them, we have tasted the ashes of hopelessness; we have walked through the ashes of our loss and pain; we have stood knee-deep in the ashes of our brokenness. God of our lives, out of the dust of creation you have formed us and given us life. The circumstances of this year, which themselves have sprinkled ashes across our lives, may have precluded our being able to receive a visible sign of our repentance and death; yet we are reminded that by your gift of grace in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, we are granted life forever with you.

***People: Amen.***

**LITANY OF CONFESSION**

***God of mercy, we confess to you our faulty fast.***

***Instead of setting the oppressed free, we buy cheap without asking who pays with poor wages and abuse.***

***Instead of inviting the homeless poor into our houses, we erect fences and gates to keep them out.***

***Instead of breaking the yoke, we continue consuming until the earth cries out its pain.***

***Forgive us when we humble ourselves as an alternative to actually changing.***

***Forgive us when our spiritual disciplines turn us in on ourselves and away from our neighbors both near and far.***

***Forgive us when we hide ourselves from our kin, the hungry, the naked, the poor, our sisters and brothers in Christ.***

***Forgive us and turn us to the fast you desire through Jesus Christ. Amen.***

**Presider:** As Lent begins, know that God understands how we struggle to stay open and compassionate. The invitation is not to focus on our inadequacies, but on God’s gift of grace and love which transforms our hearts and minds. That gift is given to us again, here and now. Be encouraged.

***People: Amen.***

**THE PEACE** *(Please greet each other in the name of the Lord.)*

**OFFERTORY**

**Presider:** *(Gives this or another offertory sentence)* Gracious God, through our offerings of worship, time, money, and prayer, we seek to make space for you in our lives. During this season of Lent, may we endeavor to loosen our grasp on the treasures of this world and seek to store up for ourselves treasure in heaven. May we, with generous hearts, use the gifts we have been given for your good work of justice, peace, and service in the world.

***People: Amen.***

**GREAT THANKSGIVING** Rite II Prayer A

**Presider:** The Lord be with you.

***People: And also with you.***

**Presider:** Lift up your hearts.

***People: We lift them to the Lord.***

**Presider:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

**Presider:** It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every‑where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to live no longer for ourselves alone, but for him who died for us and rose again. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

**SANCTUS**

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.***

**Presider:** Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

**↑**On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

**↑**After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, “Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

***All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.***

**Presider:** We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts. **∞**Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. **+**Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

**↑**All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.

***People: AMEN.***

**LORD’S PRAYER**

**Presider:** As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,

***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. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.***

**FRACTION (THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD)**

*(The Presider breaks the consecrated bread. A brief period of silence is kept.)*

**Presider:** Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

***People: have mercy on us.***

**Presider:** Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

***People: have mercy on us.***

**Presider:** Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:

***People: grant us peace.***

**Presider:** **↑**The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

**THIRD SONG** – Forty Days And Forty Nights

**POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

**Presider:** Let us pray.

***All: Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.***

**BLESSING**

**Presider:**  So let the ashes come as beginning and not as end; the first sign but not the final. Let them rest upon you as invocation and invitation, and let them take you the way that ashes know to go. May they mark you with the memory of fire and of the life that came before the burning: the life that rises and returns and finds its way again. See what shimmers amid their darkness, what endures within their dust. See how they draw us toward the mystery that will consume but not destroy, that will blossom from the blazing, that will scorch us with its joy.

***People: Amen.***

**FOURTH SONG** – Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

**DISMISSAL**

**Presider:** Our loving Creator does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their distorted lives and live. Therefore we implore God to grant us true repentance that those things which we do this day may be pleasing to God, that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, and that at the last we may come to God’s eternal joy; through Jesus Christ. Go in peace.

***People: Amen.***

**Invitation:** “Wisdom in Ash” insertion into the Invitation:

https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/01/reflection-wisdom-of-ash.html

**Collect:**  Prayers For An Inclusive Church, Steven Shakespeare

**Confession:**

<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2014/01/prayer-of-confession-our-faulty-fast.html>

**Assurance of Pardon:**

https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/08/confession-based-on-psalm-51.html

**Offertory Sentence:** Adapted from <http://spaciousfaith.com/2011/03/09/wednesday-worship-piece-offertory-prayer/>

**Blessing:** <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/08/ash-wednesday-blessing.html>

**Dismissal:** https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/08/benediction-for-ash-wednesday.html