

Ash Wednesday

Text: Luke 24:46-48

⁴⁶[Jesus] told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.



Theme: Repentance Is what our World Needs

Our world today seems to be in deep trouble. There are so many bad things, which are on the rise today. Crime, immorality, and unemployment are all on the increase. We have so many families in trouble. The economy seems to be in shambles. There have been so many stories of mass killings, including the horrible actions of the former LA police officer this week. Despots in the world are amassing weapons and developing nuclear weapons. Even the way that we talk to each other is often harsh and threatening. The uncertainty and fear of our time is shown emphatically in how gun and ammunition sales have gone through the roof in recent weeks.

Things seem to be getting worse, a lot worse. This is in spite of all that we know about psychology and sociology today and how much history we can look back on and learn from. Nothing that we try seems to help people to act with more civility toward each other. In fact, nothing will work until this world stops running from God and begins to turn toward Him. Jesus says in our text that repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name will be preached to all nations. Such repentance is what our world needs today.

I. Our world is turning from God.

All of the examples that you can think of might be able to be boiled down to three categories.

The first one is our *lack of worship*. The biblical word for worship is to bow before someone. It is a sign of our humility and respect for that person. In worship God comes to meet with His people, and we want to meet Him reverently. In his Advent hymn, Paul Gerhardt begins, “**O Lord, how shall I Meet You, How welcome you aright?**” How many of us even ask that question anymore? Do we even consider that we are meeting the almighty, everlasting God in worship? We would like worship to be on our terms. We will worship God when it is convenient for us. Even our worship of God has become narcissistic. It revolves around us, so much, that we sometimes forget that it is humbling ourselves under the almighty hand of God, that He may lift us up.

The second is our *lack of morality*. Who really cares about what the church or the Bible have to say on any issue today? The best example of that is when over 500,000 people take part in the Life March every year in Washington. It is by far the biggest demonstration every year, but it hardly gets any coverage. On many issues today our society is no longer amoral, a society without morals. There are now new morals, which state that our traditional morality is wrong, especially with regard to marriage issues. The Bible is outdated. The church is repressive. Who wants to listen to the church when our world says that you are free to do anything that you want to do?

The third is our *lack of trust* in God. It is ironic that it states, “In God we trust,” on our money, because it is tempting to trust in our money and wealth to give us happiness in life. In our society it is tempting to say that I have gotten this wealth for myself on the one hand or to look to the government on the other hand. But how many of us live in the confidence that, “The Lord will provide.” Do you remember to thank Him every day for His blessings? Do you call on His name in every trouble in prayer? Do you trust that God is your dear Father, the friend who loves you most?

The Bible describes well what happens when our worship, morality, and trust in God are lacking. Judges 17:6 says that everyone did what was right in his own eyes. In that chapter a man made an idol to thank God. Romans 1:32 says, “*They not only continue to do these [wicked] things, but also approve of those who do them.*” We also remember the Lord’s words to the disciples more than once, “O ye, of little faith!”

There are consequences to our turning from God. Everyone suffers from the sin that is so prevalent in our world. Isn’t it strange that when someone steals a car that someone left running to warm up, the police always seem to come down harder on the person who let their car run, than on the thief who took it. You should be able to leave your car running with no one taking it. You should be able to leave your doors unlocked with no fear of someone stealing your things. You should be able to safely walk down the street at any time of day. You should be able to trust your banker, investment advisor, mechanic, and anyone else that you deal with. I recently read an article that said that in the early 1970’s we were sure that births outside of wedlock would be a thing of the past because of contraception and abortion. They have skyrocketed. One of the top things that children asked Santa Claus for this past Christmas was a father. Whenever we turn from God and His ways, we only make things worse. We are like the prodigal son, who ran from his father. It seemed like a great idea at first, but eventually he came to see how good his father had been to him. He turned and went home to his father.

II. That turning back to God is what repentance is.

By grace He calls us from our sins and trust in His forgiveness. Jesus says that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name. When we see our sins and how they have harmed us and other people, Jesus still calls us to turn back to him. The biblical words for repentance literally mean “to turn.” In fact, He pleads with us to turn back to Him. The Good News for us is that all is forgiven. He takes all of our sins away. That is where this season of Lent is such a blessing. It is during this season of the year when we remember the price that Christ paid for our redemption. Unlike us He lived a perfect moral life. There was no sin in His life at all. Unlike us He submitted perfectly to God’s will, even though His Father’s will was that He would bear all of our sins. Unlike us He trusted completely in His Father’s love for Him, even when He was bearing our sins. He could die with the words, “*Father, into Your hands, I commit My Spirit.*” Unlike us Christ was completely righteous, but through faith in Him, He forgives our sins and clothes us with His righteousness.

By grace He also redeems our lives from the consequences of our sins. Because of our sins, all of our lives should be a mess, and our world should be in worse shape than it is. But when we repent of our sins, God does bless our lives. Think of the disciples to whom Jesus spoke in our text. They all failed Him. During our Lenten services we will look at how they all fell into temptation. Christ

forgave them, and made these men into the pillars of the church Another of Paul Gerhardt's hymns says, **"I grace He lays His anger by, and pours new blessings down."** This is a wonderful part of God's grace. He uses even the chief of sinners for His purposes. He forgives us and makes us fit for His service. He blesses us in new ways. It is never too late to repent and turn to Him. He can redeem any of our lives with His grace and mercy.

Our world tries so many things to bring it out of the trouble that we have gotten ourselves into, but they all fail. Our text and this Lenten season gives us the only thing that will make this world a better place. That is repentance. When we repent of our sins, God forgives them all and uses us to bring His goodness and love into this world. May He give each of us such repentant hearts this lenten season and always.

Amen.

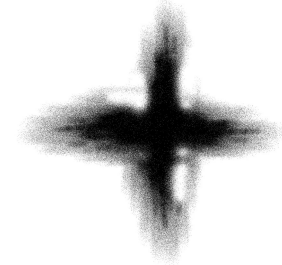
*Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
February 13, 2013*

Ash Wednesday Order of Worship

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OPENING HYMN - 425 "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

INVOCATION

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

INTROIT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY (Ps. 51:17,1-3,6-12)

P: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

C: a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

P: Have mercy upon me O God,

C: according to Your unfailing love;

P: according to Your great compassion

C: blot out my transgressions,

P: Wash away all my iniquity

C: **and cleanse me from my sin.**

P: For I know my transgressions,

C: **and my sin is always before me.**

P: Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;

C: **You teach wisdom in the inmost place.**

P: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

C: **wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.**

P: Let me hear joy and gladness;

C: **let the bones You have crushed rejoice.**

P: Hide your face from my sins

C: **and blot out all my iniquity.**

P: Create in me a pure heart, O God,

C: **and renew a right spirit within me.**

P: Do not cast me from your presence

C: **or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

P: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation

C: **and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.**

All: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

P: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

C: **a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**

COLLECT FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

P: The Lord be with you;

C: **and also with you.**

P: Let us pray:

All: **Almighty and everlasting God, because You hate nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent, create in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily repenting of our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain from You, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - Joel 2:12-19

¹² "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

¹³ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. ¹⁶ Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷ Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

¹⁸ Then the LORD will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people. ¹⁹ The LORD will reply to them: "I am sending you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations."

CHOIR - "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed"**EPISTLE LESSON - 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2**

²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ¹As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ²For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

GRADUAL [Heb. 12:2]

P: Oh, come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C: **the author and perfecter of our faith,**

P: who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame,

C: **and sat down at the right hand of God.**

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

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 6th Chapter!

C: **Glory to You, O Lord!**

P: ¹"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, 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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so 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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But 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..."When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to men 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 moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

SERMON HYMN - 611 "Chief of Sinners though I Be

SERMON - Luke 24:46-48 "Repentance Is what our World Needs"

NICENE CREED - [Back cover of the Hymnal]

OFFERING**ASH WEDNESDAY LITANY**

P: God the Father in Heaven,

C: **have mercy.**

P: God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

- C: **have mercy.**
P: God the Holy Spirit,
C: **have mercy.**
P: Be gracious to us.
C: **Spare us, good Lord.**
P: Be gracious to us.
C: **Help us, Good Lord.**
P: By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your 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:
C: **Help us, Good Lord.**
P: In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgement:
C: **Help us, Good Lord.**
P: We poor sinners implore You:
C: **To hear us, O Lord.**
P: 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:
C: **we implore You to hear us, good Lord.**
P: To draw all to Yourself; to bless those who are instructed in the faith; to watch over and console the poor, 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:
C: **we implore You to hear us, good Lord.**
P: To turn our hearts to You; to turn the hearts of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; and graciously to hear our prayers:
C: **we implore You to hear us, good Lord.**
P: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
C: **we implore You to hear us.**
P: Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
C: **Have mercy.**
P: Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
C: **Have mercy.**
P: Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
C: **Grant us Your peace.**
P: O Christ,
C: **Hear us.**
P: O Lord,
C: **Have mercy.**
P: O Christ,
C: **Have mercy. O Lord, have mercy. Amen.**

HYMN - 560 "Drawn to the Cross"

SERVICE OF CORPORATE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

OPENING VERSES – Psalm 32:1,5

P: Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,

C: **whose sins are covered.**

P: Then I acknowledged my sin to you

C: **and did not cover up my iniquity.**

P: I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”—

C: **and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

CONFESSION – based on Daniel 9:4ff

C: **O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your Word.**

Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame...because of our unfaithfulness to you. O LORD, we, our leaders, and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. You, O Lord our God are merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against You;

Now, O Lord our God, in keeping with all Your righteous acts and for the sake of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ, turn away your anger. Be gracious and have mercy upon us.

THE ABSOLUTION – Psalm 103:8-12

P: 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 nor 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. Upon this Your confession, I forgive You all Your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen**

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE PEACE

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always

C: **and also with you.**

AGNUS DEI (LSB p. 198)

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS

570 "Just as I am"; **606** "I Lay My Sins on Jesus" **550** "Lamb of God"

NUNC DIMITTIS (LSB p. 199)

Lord, now lettest Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THANKSGIVING

P: O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good

C: **and his mercy endures forever.**

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

P: We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

BENEDICAMUS

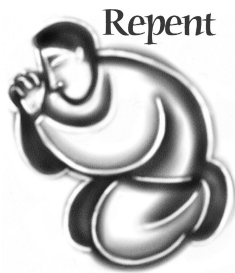
P: Let us bless the Lord

C: **thanks be to God.**

BENEDICTION

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN - 761 "Rock of Ages"

Repent

Welcome to Benediction Lutheran Church! This world is in rough shape. People have all kinds of solutions to make it better, but there is only one thing that can change this world. That is a change of our hearts through repentance. That is what the season of Lent is all about. We bid our visitors a special welcome, please introduce yourself to Pastor Hougard and sign our register during the offering.

We would like to thank the volunteers for the chicken dinner this evening. Next week the choice will be serving casseroles.