

Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2021

Pastor Elaine Hewes, preaching

Lent is a time when we prepare as a faith community to meet the risen Christ at Easter. It is a time for repentance, where we acknowledge and turn away from whatever keeps us from living the Gospel, a time to remind ourselves that we are called to lives rooted in right relationship with God and neighbor. As we prepare to meet Christ in his resurrected glory, we pray for a change of heart towards greater love of God and neighbor; we fast from self-indulgence and indifference to the poor and suffering; and finally, we share our food, our wealth and our time with others in need.

Over these 40 days, may the Holy Spirit give us the strength to simply practice justice, love kindness and walk attentively with our God, that we might rejoice in the triumph of God's justice in Jesus at Easter.

Opening Hymn: 599 in ELW *Lord Jesus, Think on me* (*in back of bulletin*)

Lord, as we begin this holy season of Lent, grant us a change of heart that we might turn away from sin and follow your Son's Gospel. We ask you to fill us with a hunger for what is just. By your grace, may our lives become more deeply rooted in prayer, self-sacrifice and a willingness to share, in order that your Rule of justice might more fully flourish in our hearts, we greet your risen Son at Easter. We ask you this, through Christ our Lord.

Joel 2:1-2,12-17

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near--
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them
in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

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;

sanctify a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation;

assemble the aged;

gather the children,

even infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room,

and the bride her canopy.

Between the vestibule and the altar

let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.

Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,

and do not make your heritage a mockery,

a byword among the nations.

Why should it be said among the peoples,

'Where is their God?'"

Response based on Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

And cleanse me from my sin.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

For I know my transgressions,

And my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned.

And done what is evil in your sight.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

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.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

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.

Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever 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 whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Reflection

Pastor Elaine Hewes

Music Interlude *Gnossienne # 1*

Eric Satie

Confession

**Most holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another,
and before the whole company of heaven,
that we have sinned by our fault,
by our own fault,
by our most grievous fault,
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our exploitation of other people, and our complicity in systemic racism, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for others who come after us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Restore us, O God, and transform us in your love.

Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

The imposition of ashes

Our ancestors in the faith used ashes as a sign of 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.

May these ashes not only be a sign of our repentance and death, but be a reminder that by your gift of grace in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, we are granted fullness of life with you.

Amen.

– *Iona Community*

The ashes are imposed with the following words:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Go in peace to keep a holy Lent and to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

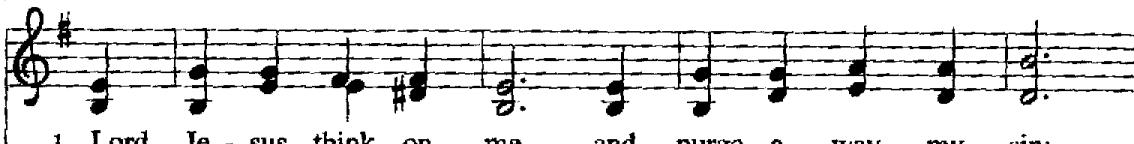
Please leave in silence

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Lord Jesus, Think on Me



1 Lord Je - sus, think on me, and purge a - way my sin;
2 Lord Je - sus, think on me, by anx - ious thoughts op - pressed;
3 Lord Je - sus, think on me, nor let me go a - stray;
4 Lord Je - sus, think on me, that, when the flood is past,



from self pas - sions set me free and make me pure with - in.
let me your lov - ing ser - vant be and taste your prom - ised rest.
through dark-ness and per - plex - i - ty point out your cho - sen way.
I may the e-ter - nal bright-ness see and share your joy at last.

