ASH WEDNESDAY February 14, 2024 Holy Communion 7:00 p.m.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

(Luke 23:34)

ASH WEDNESDAY The First Day of Lent

₩ ₩ ₩ February 14, 2024

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. They also lead us to hear his words afresh. Jesus once said: "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). Our Midweek Lenten services this year will include sermons on Jesus' Seven Words from the cross in which we will seek to discover the "spirit and life" they give. The sermons will be guided by notes from Dr. David Peter of Concordia Seminary, and the hymn of the day each week will be stanzas of *Jesus*, *in Your Dying Woes* – a hymn based on the Seven Words.

May God bless our worship and devotion.

PRELUDE

Today Your Mercy Calls Us Setting: F. D. Ashdown

ENTRANCE HYMN Come, Ye Disconsolate (see insert) TLH 531

- Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
 Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
 Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
 Farth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.
- 2. Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
 Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!
 Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
 "Farth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot cure."
- Here see the bread of life, see waters flowing Forth from the throne of God, pure from above.
 Come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing Earth has no sorrow but heav'n can remove.

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 should come forward in two lines. Psalm 51 can also be read at this time.

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 \maltese Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN Jesus, I will Ponder Now Sts. 1-3,5

LSB 440

- Jesus, I will ponder now
 On Your holy passion;
 With Your Spirit me endow
 For such meditation.
 Grant that I in love and faith
 May the image cherish
 Of Your suff'ring, pain, and death
 That I may not perish.
- 2 Make me see Your great distress, Anguish, and affliction, Bonds and stripes and wretchedness And Your crucifixion; Make me see how scourge and rod, Spear and nails did wound You, How for them You died, O God, Who with thorns had crowned You.
- 3 Yet, O Lord, not thus alone Make me see Your passion, But its cause to me make known And its termination. Ah! I also and my sin

Wrought Your deep affliction; This indeed the cause has been Of Your crucifixion.

5 If my sins give me alarm
And my conscience grieve me,
Let Your cross my fear disarm;
Peace of conscience give me.
Help me see forgiveness won
By Your holy passion.
If for me He slays His Son,
God must have compassion!

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 are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that truly repenting of our sins, we may obtain from you, the God of mercy, full pardon and forgiveness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, of God, now and forever. Amen.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

FIRST READING (Be seated)

Joel 2:12-19

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 Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee Setting: K. L. Scott

Out of the depths I cry to thee, Lord, my sins bewailing! Bow down thy gracious ear to me, make thou my prayer availing. Mark not my misdeeds in thy book, gracious Lord, most holy; On my sins in mercy look; who can stand before thee? Hear my prayer, hear my cry, hear my supplication. Thou my hope, thou my light, thou my soul's deliverance.

With thee there is forgiveness, Lord, love and grace abounding. The greatest thought or deed or word were else but empty sounding.

All who in thy sight appear come in sinful measure; All before thee bow in fear seeking thy good pleasure. Hear my prayer, hear my cry, hear my supplication. Thou my hope, thou my light, thou my soul's deliverance. Amen.

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

We implore 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.

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says,

"In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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

Luke 23:20-25, 32-34

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 23rd chapter. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

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:

Corrie Ten Boom was a Christian woman incarcerated in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. She was imprisoned

because her family had sought to hide and protect Jewish people during the Holocaust. In other words, she was imprisoned for doing what was morally and ethically right. You may be familiar with her story from her autobiographical book The Hiding Place, which was also made into a movie. The Museum of the Bible in DC has a standing exhibit based on her story.

Corrie's experience in the Nazi concentration camp was nothing short of horrific. She was forced to work hard jobs for a mere pittance of spoiled food and to endure living conditions that were atrocious and inhumane. Starvation and disease were regular occurrences, and she was subjected to all kinds of humiliation and degradation. Especially difficult was the terrible treatment she received from the prison guards, who mocked and used the prisoners for their own pleasure. Corrie and her sister Betsy were often forced to pass naked through a delousing shower while the male prison guards stared and leered at them.

Thankfully, Corrie survived this experience of imprisonment. When the Allies liberated her concentration camp at the end of the war, she was set free. However, none of her family members lived to join her.

After the war, Corrie Ten Boom became a popular speaker. She addressed Christian gatherings in Europe and North America, telling of her experiences and sharing how her faith gave her strength to persevere. She would often emphasize the need to forgive – commending forgiveness as the means to bring healing from the scars of war.

Typically after her speaking presentations members of the audience would come forward to talk to her. One night after speaking in Munich, a man approached her with an outstretched hand and said, "Ja, Fraulein! It is wonderful that Jesus forgives us all our sins, just as you say!"

Corrie reached out to grasp the man's hand, but then suddenly halted. For she recognized his face. He was one of the prison guards who had abused her. Those days of his leering, lecherous, mocking looks, came rushing back to her, and her hand was now frozen in midair. Moments earlier she had lectured on

forgiveness, but now she stood face to face with someone who had committed great atrocities against her. Could she forgive the likes of this man? Could you forgive someone like that?

Today is Ash Wednesday – the beginning of the season of Lent. Lent is all about forgiveness – both the forgiveness God extends to us and the forgiveness we are to extend to others.

Forgiveness is made possible by Jesus' journey to the cross. But that doesn't mean forgiveness is easy. And that's especially true in cases where we've been shamed and brutalized.

In thinking about our call to forgive, we should remember that no one was more betrayed and brutalized than Jesus. He was rejected by his own people and his followers deserted him. One of his closest associates betrayed him, and another denied having anything to do with him. He was tried in a kangaroo court by religious clergy who proceeded to pummel him with their fists. He was taken to the Roman governor, who declared that he had done nothing worthy of punishment and yet had him delivered over to be scourged and executed.

And after the pain of these injustices, Jesus then suffered great verbal and physical abuse. The chief priests and elders scoffed at him, accusing him of being a false prophet and blasphemer. The Roman soldiers mocked him by clothing him in pretend royal garb. They pressed a crown of thorns upon his head and placed a reed in his hands as a scepter, then they bowed before him and pretended to pay him homage, only to laugh and strike him with the reed. They scourged him, whipped him, and crucified him. Even as he hung on the cross, the priests and the people further reviled him.

Yet in the midst of these atrocities and horrors, the first words Jesus spoke as he hung on that cross formed a prayer on behalf of others. Simply, and graciously, Jesus prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

How could Jesus have said this? How could he ask God to forgive those who had abused him so? How could he forgive the likes of Peter who denied him, Pilate who unjustly condemned him, and the soldiers who brutalized him? How could he seek absolution for the priests who had instigated his arrest, the crowds who had turned against him, and those who mocked him at the base of the cross? How?

Jesus could do this because he was resolute in carrying out his mission. He was doing what he had come to do. As he once stated to his disciples: he had come to "give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Jesus later explained that it was necessary that he suffer these things (Luke 24:26). It was necessary so that he might make atonement for sin – that is, to pay the price of sin's deadly punishment. Atonement would make forgiveness possible, and that was his goal. Jesus himself declared this purpose when he said: "Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations" (Luke 24:46–47). His pain and suffering were all for the purpose of bringing forgiveness.

But for whom was this forgiveness earned? Jesus declared from the cross, "Father, forgive them!" But who is them?

Definitely "them" included those involved in his crucifixion. That meant the religious priests and elders who instigated the arrest, the crowds who called for his crucifixion, the Roman governor

and soldiers who carried out the execution. "Them" also included Peter the denier, the disciples who abandoned him, and even Judas who betrayed him.

But more than that, "them" also includes you and me! "Them" is us — because we also are complicit in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The sins of all humanity sent Jesus to the cross, and that means your sins and mine as well.

Jesus bore our iniquities on Calvary's tree, not his own. He came to be our substitute – hanging on the cross and pleading for our forgiveness.

Today is Ash Wednesday. But it is also another holiday too – Valentine's Day. And what an interesting juxtaposition these two days present!

One point of comparison is the sad fact that those we sin against the most are often the ones we love the most. Husbands sin against wives, and wives sin against husbands. Parents sin against children, and children sin against parents. Brothers sin against sisters, friends sin against friends, etc. In these close relationships where love is strong, familiarity, sadly, can also breed contempt. And in these relationships of great feelings, those feelings will sometimes get hurt, which then often leads to sin.

Thankfully, there is another point of comparison between these two holidays – one which helps us with this problem. This is the love which God shows to us. It was love that drove Jesus to the cross. As the scripture says: "God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Love propelled Jesus to pay for our sins. And love can propel us to forgive one another. Learning to forgive each other is, in fact, key to any relationship. Relationships where forgiveness has taken place will become deeper and stronger.

As Jesus hung on the cross, he pleaded for our forgiveness. But he also earned that forgiveness. He accomplished it by bearing its full weight there on the cross. The Apostle Paul writes, "And you, who were dead in your trespasses . . . God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13–14).

This forgiveness is for you! And for everyone!

Yet not everyone receives it. Because some don't want it. Only through repentance can one receive God's forgiveness, and some don't feel a need to repent.

There is no evidence that Caiaphas the high priest repented. It is unlikely that Pontius Pilate was contrite over the death of Christ.

Most of the Roman soldiers who carried out the crucifixion, we can assume, never acknowledged their grave transgression.

Accordingly, they did not receive the forgiveness Christ earned for them and offered to them.

But some did receive that forgiveness. The thief crucified next to Jesus confessed his guilt and was given the promise of paradise (Luke 23:40–43). Peter repented of his denials and was reinstated by Christ as an apostle (Luke 22:61–62, John 21:15–17). A crowd of 3000 souls, who recognized their role of collaborating in Jesus's crucifixion, repented and were baptized on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36–41). Even many of the priests "became obedient to the faith" which recognizes Jesus as Savior (Acts 6:7). In each case, they repented of their sin and received the gracious gift of forgiveness.

On Ash Wednesday, as we begin the penitential season of Lent, let us make sure to recall that one can only receive God's forgiveness through repentance.

At the same time, let us also hear the assurance of God's forgiveness. Lent proclaims loudly and clearly that forgiveness was purchased by the shed blood of Christ and is now offered to those who acknowledge their sin. This is made abundantly clear in verses such as 1 John 1:8–9, which says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

So today, come before God in true penitence and receive his full forgiveness! And not only receive it but give it. We can offer absolution to those who have wronged us. The Spirit of Christ within us empowers us to forgive others, even as we have been forgiven.

Corrie Ten Boom stood face to face with her former captor, and it caused her to pause. But the situation was now different than before. The man in front of her was obviously penitent, trusting in the grace of Jesus Christ. Corrie's hand was still frozen, not able to reach out and clasp the hand of one who had previously shamed

her. So she prayed. But she didn't pray: "Father, forgive him." Instead, she prayed: "Lord, forgive me! Forgive me because I can't forgive!" And as she prayed, she sensed anew God's forgiveness to her. Her arm relaxed, and she reached out and clasped the hand of the man who earlier had oppressed her. She forgave him because she had been forgiven.

That is what Ash Wednesday is all about—forgiveness. That is what Lent is all about—forgiveness. That is what the cross is all about—forgiveness.

Let that be what we are all about as well. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN (Stand) Jesus, In Your Dying Woes Sts. 1-3 LSB 447

- 1 First Word: Luke 23:34
 Jesus, in Your dying woes,
 Even while Your lifeblood flows,
 Craving pardon for Your foes:
 Hear us, holy Jesus.
- Savior, for our pardon sue When our sins Your pangs renew, For we know not what we do: Hear us, holy Jesus.
- 3 Oh, may we, who mercy need, Be like You in heart and deed, When with wrong our spirits bleed: Hear us, holy Jesus.

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 or Sit)

A + A

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.

EUCHARISTIC 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.

COMMUNION HYMN Savior, When in Dust to Thee

LSB 419

- 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!
- 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!
- 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!

POST COMMUNION PRAYER (Stand)

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth Sts. 1, 2, 4
LSB 438

- 1 A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
 The guilt of sinners bearing
 And, laden with the sins of earth,
 None else the burden sharing;
 Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
 To slaughter led without complaint,
 That spotless life to offer,
 He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies,
 The mockery, and yet replies,
 "All this I gladly suffer."
- 2 This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend, The Lamb of God, our Savior, Whom God the Father chose to send To gain for us His favor. "Go forth, My Son," the Father said, "And free My children from their dread Of guilt and condemnation. The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,

But by Your passion they will share The fruit of Your salvation."

4 Lord, when Your glory I shall see
And taste Your kingdom's pleasure,
Your blood my royal robe shall be,
My joy beyond all measure!
When I appear before Your throne,
Your righteousness shall be my crown;
With these I need not hide me.
And there, in garments richly wrought,
As Your own bride shall we be brought
To stand in joy beside You.

POSTLUDE

A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth
Setting: Robert C. Schultz

THOSE SERVING IN OUR MIDST:

Greeter: Steve Berg

Comm. Assist.: Judy Koucky Reader: Aaron Siebrass

Acknowledgments

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