

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE: THE PEOPLE OF THE CROSS—PILATE

Music: Carol Kendall

Worship Leader: Rev. Alex Creager (Stone House Presbyterian Church)
Rev. Mi Sook Ahn (Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church)

Prelude:

Lighting the Candles:

Greeting:

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People: God's mercy endures forever.

Call to Worship: (Based on Joel 2, 2Cor 5, Worship Annual 2021, Kindle)

Leader: A trumpet sounds from afar.

People: Listen, God is calling.

Leader: What does the Lord say to us?

People: Now is the time. Today is the day.

Leader: Now is the time to return to God.

People: Today is the day of our salvation.

Leader: Our sins cover us like mist upon the mountains.

People: But, you, Lord, have shown us your forgiveness.

Leader: Praise our God of grace and constant compassion!

All: Thanks be to our Lord!

Opening Prayer: (Based on Psalm 51, Matt 6, Worship Annual 2021)

Our hearts are laid bare before you, Lord.

You see us as no one else does. You see past the imposter's masks we wear. O God, we come to worship you, not with empty words and hollow acts of piety, but with lonely, aching spirits. We long for the day of joy and gladness we have known with you. Fold back the darkness that surrounds us. Show us your mercy. Cover us with your grace. We return our whole hearts to you this day, as we pray humbly together in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn:

"Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy"

UMH #340

¹Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore; Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love and power. I will arise and go to Jesus; he will embrace me with his arms; in the arms of my dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms.

³Come ye weary, heavy laden, lost and ruined by the fall; if you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all. I will arise and go to Jesus; he will embrace me with his arms; in the arms of my dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms.

Scripture Lesson:**Jonah 3:4-10**

⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

⁶When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. ⁸Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. ⁹Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish." ¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. (New Revised Standard Version)

Gospel Lesson:**Matthew 27: 15-24**

¹⁵Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. ¹⁷So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." ²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²²Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

²⁴So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." (New Revised Standard Version)

Sermon:**"Why We Choose the Ashes"****Rev. Alex Creager****Stone House Presbyterian Church****Hymn:****"Take, O Take Me As I Am," by John Bell**

**Take, O take me as I am; Summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart, And live in me.**

(https://www.mary.org/blog/201401/take-o-take-me-i-am/#.YCLyxehKg_E)

Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline

(United Methodist Book of Worship, 322-324)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

The early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation. During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to participation in the life of the Church.

In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent:

By self-examination and repentance;

By prayer, fasting, and self-denial;

And by reading and meditating on God's Holy Words.

To make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel (bow) before our Creator and Redeemer.

(Prayer in Silence)

Thanksgiving Over the Ashes:

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our morality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Imposition of Ashes: "Remember that You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Prayer of Confession: (Based on Psalm 51, Worship Annual 2021, kindle)

Pastor: Lord, you abound in grace and mercy.

People: Wash away our guilt, and cleanse us from our sins.

Pastor: There's no way to hide what we've done.

People: Our misdeeds constantly confront us.

Pastor: We deserve your judgment.

People: But we plead for your forgiveness.

Pastor: You alone can change us and transform us.

People: You alone can restore our joy.

Pastor: Create a pure heart within us, Lord.

People: Renew us, revive us, and uphold us.

Pastor: Open our mouths, that we might proclaim your praises.

People: Give voice to your songs of deliverance. Amen.

Words of Assurance (Based on Psalm 51)

Pastor: The Lord takes little pleasure in our earthly offerings, but delights in the sacrifice of our broken spirits. God will never turn away a wounded heart.

The Peace: Let us offer one another signs of reconciliation and love with one another.

Offering: From His Hands (Theresa Kaufman)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

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. Amen.

***Hymn: "The Canticle of the Turning"**

¹My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?

Refrain:

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.

²Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.
(Refrain)

(<https://charlesghose.com/2020/05/25/canticle-of-the-turning/#:~:text=Canticle%20of%20the%20Turning%201%20My%20soul%20cries,Could%20the%20world%20be%20about%20to%20turn%3F%20Refrain>)

***Benediction: (Based on 2 Corinthians 6)**

Pastor: Though we were overwhelmed by sorrow,

People: We can rejoice in Christ.

Pastor: Though we were dead,

People: We are alive in Christ.

Pastor: Though we had nothing,

People: We possess everything in Christ.

Pastor: In Christ, the day of deliverance has dawned!

All: Amen.

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