

# Ash Wednesday Worship

*According to the Rite of the Episcopal Church, USA*

On this day, the Celebrant begins the liturgy with the Salutation and the Collect of the Day.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wickedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## FIRST READING

*Isaiah 58:1-12*

Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me

and delight to know my ways,

as if they were a nation that practiced  
righteousness

and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;

they ask of me righteous judgements,

they delight to draw near to God.

'Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?'

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,  
and oppress all your workers.

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight

and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today

will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose,

a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,

and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,

a day acceptable to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,

to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,

and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,

and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;

your vindicator shall go before you,

the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;

you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,

the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

if you offer your food to the hungry

and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,

then your light shall rise in the darkness

and your gloom be like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you continually,

and satisfy your needs in parched places,

and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,

like a spring of water,

whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;

you shall raise up the foundations of many

generations;

you shall be called the repairer of the breach,

the restorer of streets to live in.

## PSALM 103

*Benedic, anima mea*

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 He forgives all your sins  
and heals all your infirmities;  
4 He redeems your life from the grave  
and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness;  
5 He satisfies you with good things,  
and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.  
6 The LORD executes righteousness  
and judgment for all who are oppressed.  
7 He made his ways known to Moses  
and his works to the children of Israel.  
8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.  
9 He will not always accuse us,  
nor will he keep his anger for ever.  
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.  
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.  
12 As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our sins from us.

13 As a father cares for his children,  
so does the LORD care for those who fear him.  
14 For he himself knows whereof we are made;  
he remembers that we are but dust.]  
15 Our days are like the grass;  
we flourish like a flower of the field;  
16 When the wind goes over it, it is gone,  
and its place shall know it no more.  
17 But the merciful goodness of the LORD endures  
for ever on those who fear him,  
and his righteousness on children's children;  
18 On those who keep his covenant  
and remember his commandments and do  
them.  
19 The LORD has set his throne in heaven,  
and his kingship has dominion over all.  
20 Bless the LORD, you angels of his,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
and hearken to the voice of his word.  
21 Bless the LORD, all you his hosts,  
you ministers of his who do his will.  
22 Bless the LORD, all you works of his,  
in all places of his dominion; \*  
bless the LORD, O my soul.

## SECOND READING

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

We entreat 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. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

## GOSPEL

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

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.

## SERMON *The Rev. Bruce W. Gray*

*After the Sermon the Celebrant invites the people to the observance of a holy Lent, saying:*

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

*Silence is then kept for a time.*

*The Celebrant says the following prayer:*

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 mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

*The ashes are imposed with the following words:*

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

*The following Psalm is then said:*

## **PSALM 51**

*Miserere mei, Deus*

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.  
2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
4 Against you only have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight.  
5 And so you are justified when you speak  
and upright in your judgment.  
6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.  
7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me,  
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.  
8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;  
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.  
9 Make me hear of joy and gladness,  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.  
10 Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquities.

11 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
12 Cast me not away from your presence  
and take not your holy Spirit from me.  
13 Give me the joy of your saving help again  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.  
14 I shall teach your ways to the wicked,  
and sinners shall return to you.  
15 Deliver me from death, O God,  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,  
O God of my salvation.  
16 Open my lips, O Lord,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.  
17 Had you desired it, I would have offered  
sacrifice,  
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.  
18 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not  
despise.

## **Litany of Penitence**

*The Celebrant and People say together*

**Most holy and merciful Father:  
We confess to you and to one another,  
and to the whole communion of saints  
in heaven and on earth,  
that we have sinned by our own fault  
in thought, word, and deed;  
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.**

*The Celebrant continues*

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and 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, Lord.*

We have been deaf 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, Lord.*

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,

*We confess to you, Lord.*

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,

*We confess to you, Lord.*

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

*We confess to you, Lord.*

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

*We confess to you, Lord.*

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

*We confess to you, Lord.*

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

*Accept our repentance, Lord.*

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

*Accept our repentance, Lord.*

For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

*Accept our repentance, Lord.*

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;

*Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.*

Accomplish in us 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.*

*The Celebrant says:*

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel. Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The People say together*

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,  
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING**

*The People say together:*

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,  
we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks  
for all your goodness and loving-kindness  
to us and to all whom you have made.  
We bless you for our creation, preservation,  
and all the blessings of this life;  
but above all for your immeasurable love  
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;  
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.  
And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies,  
that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,  
not only with our lips, but in our lives,  
by giving up our selves to your service,  
and by walking before you  
in holiness and righteousness all our days;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

*The Celebrant says:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all  
evermore. **Amen.**

*2 Corinthians 13:14*

*Then may be said:*

Let us bless the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**