

March 5, 2025 Ash Wednesday



## Open Door Policies: Lowering Our Defenses

Whenever someone accuses us of doing wrong, it's easy to get defensive. We make excuses. "I'm not that bad." We try and balance the scales. "Okay, that was wrong. But look at all the good I do!" We play the comparison game. "At least I'm not like him!" With our defenses go up, repentance is impossible.

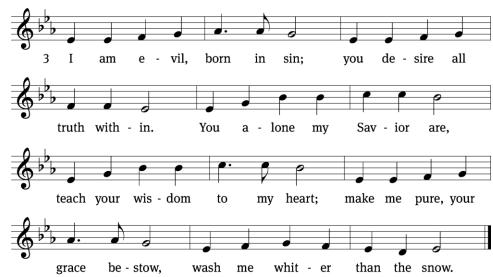
God, however, has a strategy for lowing our defenses. He assures us that his door is open, and that his home is the place we don't need to pretend to be something that we're not—perfect. Our Father does not ask us to come to him and confess our sin so that he might know what we've done. He already knows. He asks us to repent so that we might fully know what we've done. Only when we grasp the true weight of our sin, will we call out to God for mercy. When we do, God is always quick to forgive.

Ash Wednesday marks the begging of Lent, reminding us of our mortality and calling us to repent. The ancient practice of imposing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful is what gives Ash Wednesday its name. The church father Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-215) writes of the practice as a public expression of repentance and of our human frailty that stands in need of Christ. Ashes can remind us forcefully of our need for redeeming grace as they recall words from the rite of Christian burial—"earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."—words that will someday be spoken over us all.

#### Please Remain Seated

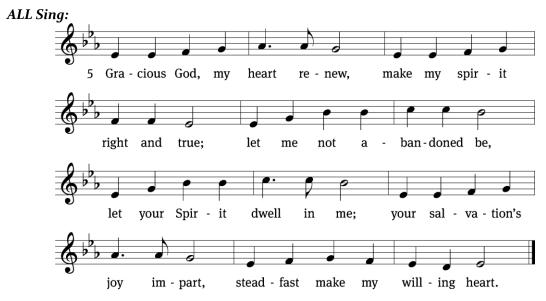
### Psalm 51

- M: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;
- C: According to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
- M: Wash away all my iniquity
- C: And cleanse me from my sin.
- M: For I know my transgressions,
- C: And my sin is always before me.
- M: Against you, you only, have I sinned
- C: And done what is evil in your sight.

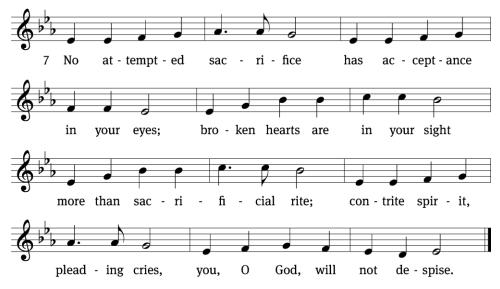


- M: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
- C: Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- M: Let me hear joy and gladness;
- C: Let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- M: Hide your face from my sins
- C: And blot out all my iniquity.

ALL Sing:



- M: Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
- C: So that sinners will turn back to you.
- M: Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior,
- C: And my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- M: Open my lips, Lord,
- C: And my mouth will declare your praise.



### Stand

### Confession

M: Brothers and sisters in Christ, God created us to know joy in fellowship with him, to love all people, and to live in harmony with all creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. By our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live. Therefore, God in his mercy has sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take our place under the law, to suffer for us, and to die the death we deserve. God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

During the forty days of Lent, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. The time of Lent reminds us that to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, we must also know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor.

Let us confess our sins, ask our Father for forgiveness, and commit ourselves to this struggle.

- M: Most holy and merciful Father,
- C: We confess to you and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault, by our own grievous fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
- M: 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.
- C: Have mercy on us, Lord.
- M: 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 the Holy Spirit.
- C: Have mercy on us, Lord.
- M: We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives
- C: We confess to you, O Lord.

- M: Our love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, our negligence in worship and prayer, and our failure to show the faith that is in us
- C: We confess to you, O Lord.
- M: Forgive us, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
- C: Forgive us, Lord.
- M: For what we think or say or do that is at variance with your will,
- C: Forgive us, Lord.
- M: Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.
- C: Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great.

Be Seated

### **Imposition of Ashes**

Those who desire to make the sign of the cross in ashes on the banner will come forward as directed by an usher. This banner will remain visible during the season of Lent until the banner is cleansed on Easter.

The purpose of ashes is to have a visual reminder that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and death means our bodies return to dust from which Adam was made (Genesis 3:19). As ashes are biblical pictures of repentance (Job 42:6; Matthew 11:21), the use of ashes eventually became associated with Lent, a penitential season of the church year. When the ashes form the shape of a cross there is also a visible reminder about the precious cross of Christ.

As each person takes the ashes the minister says:

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

After all return to their pew, the minister says:

- M: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation
- C: That we may show forth your glory in the world.
- M: By the cross and suffering of your Son, O Lord,
- C: Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

### Absolution

M: Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live.

Therefore, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and o the Holy Spirit.

During these days of Lent, let us implore God to give us renewal and his Holy Spirit. May we continue to abide in the true faith and at last be received by him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

### THE WORD

### Prayer of the Day

M: Almighty and merciful God, you never despise what you have made and always forgive those who turn to you. Create in us such new and contrite hearts that we may truly repent of our sins and obtain your full and gracious pardon; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

#### C: Amen.

#### Lesson

### 2 Samuel 12:1-13

The Lord sends the prophet Nathan to call King David to repentance. Nathan lowers David's defenses by telling the king a story about an immoral rich man.

<sup>1</sup>The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

<sup>4</sup>"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

<sup>5</sup>David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! <sup>6</sup>He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

<sup>7</sup>Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup>I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. <sup>9</sup>Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup>Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

<sup>11</sup>"This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup>You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

<sup>13</sup>Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. (NIV)

### Verse of the Day

**M:** Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. (Joel 2:13)

#### Stand

#### Gospel

To lower the defenses of those who were self-righteous, Jesus tells a parable about what makes us righteous in God's eyes—trusting in God's great mercy.

<sup>9</sup>To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup>"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

<sup>13</sup>"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

<sup>14</sup>"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (NIV)



## Apostles' Creed - The Third Article and Meaning

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.

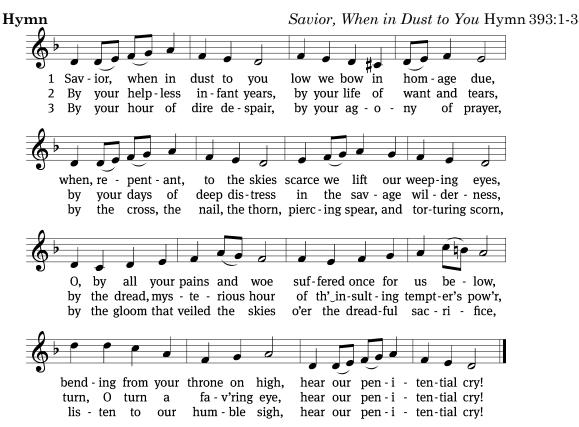
What does this mean?

- I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.
- But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.
- In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

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Be Seated
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### Sermon

### 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

God sends ambassadors to make his appeal to sinners, imploring them to be reconciled to God.

<sup>20</sup>We 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. <sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>1</sup>As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup>For 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. (NIV)

Offering	Please sign the friendship register located in your pew.		
	Guests please don't feel a necessity to give an offering today. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under		
Stand	compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).		

### Prayer for Ash Wednesday

M: Holy and righteous God, as we begin again the solemn spiritual journey of Lent, we come before you in deep humility. We confess that we are sinners, both by the nature we inherit and by the sinful thoughts, words, and actions that nature produces. Because of our sins, we deserve only your wrath and punishment. Yet you reveal yourself, not only as a God of holiness and justice but as a God of mercy and love. Despairing of our own merits and worthiness and in response to your gracious invitation, we come pleading for your forgiveness.

### C: Lord, have mercy on us for your holy name's sake.

M: You have revealed your love and mercy for us sinners in Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. You sent him into our world to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of all people. Help us grasp by faith the great truth that the pain and suffering, the mockery and ridicule, and the death and punishment he endured should have been ours. Help us understand that in incomprehensible love he suffered and died for us.

### C: Lord, have mercy on us for Jesus' sake.

M: In silent meditation let us reflect on our sins, praise our Savior for the forgiveness he has won for us, and ask for God's continued grace to remove any doubt that we are forgiven.

### Time for silent meditation

- M: God of grace and mercy, may your Spirit continue to be with us as we follow the way of the cross. As we contemplate the story of our Savior's passion, build us up in our faith. Renew in us the zeal to serve you by reflecting your love in our lives. Give us the desire and the ability to boldly proclaim the grace in which we stand, so that all for whom you lived and died may join us in fellowship now and in your presence forever.
- C: We offer our humble thanks and praise, our prayers and petitions, and ourselves in body and spirit to you, Lord God. Hear us, according to your promise, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

### 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.

### THE SACRAMENT

### Words of Institution

M: Our Lord Jesus, Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

Be Seated

### Distribution

Because God speaks of communing together as an expression of unity in faith (1 Corinthians 10:17) and warns there are dangers in taking communion in an improper way (1 Corinthians 11:27-29), we practice close communion. WELS, ELS, and members of other churches around the world who are in fellowship with WELS are welcome to commune with us. If you would like to learn more about becoming a member and communing with us in the future, please speak to pastor or an usher.

Questions for Personal Preparation for Holy Communion are located on p.15 of this service folder.

#### Just As I am Without One Plea

Just as I am, without one plea, But that thy blood was shed for me, And that thou bidd'st me come to thee. O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about With many a conflict, many a doubt, Fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Junior Choir 11:00 a.m.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, Because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thy love unknown Has broken ev'ry barrier down; Now to be thine, yea, thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

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#### Is This the Savior?

Is this the Savior nailed to the tree, dying in utmost agony? Is this the Savior who came to save us and to set us free?

Is this the Savior, broken and bruised, ruthlessly beaten, gravely abused? Is this the Savior who came to love us, all people; Gentiles and Jews?

This is the Savior who came to save us. This is the great "I AM." This is the One who came to redeem us. This is the Paschal Lamb. Lord God, be merciful. Kyrie.

Is this the Savior who raised the dead, who many hungry people fed? Is this the King, the heir of God's kingdom, now pierced with thorns on His head?

This is the Savior who came to heal us. This is the "Prince of Peace." This is the Son of God, the Almighty. This is the "King of kings." Lord God, be merciful. Kyrie.

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**Distribution Hymn** Jesus Sinners Does Receive Hymn 654 # sin - ners does oh, 1 Je sus re - ceive; may all this 2 We de - serve grief and shame, his words, rich but vet Sheep that from the fold did 3 stray are not by the 4 I, sin - ner. come with pen - i а to you а say - ing der who in sin's de - lu - sions live pon grace re - veal ing, par - don, peace, and life pro - claim: -Lord for - sak en; wea - rv souls who lost their way Sav - ior, show tent con - fes sion. me mer - cy, too; and from God Here and heav - en wan der. is hope for here their ills have per - fect heal - ing who with hum - ble Shep-herd, tak his by Christ, the in arms that are en sins grant for all mv re - mis - sion. Let these words my all who grieve: Je - sus does re - ceive. sin - ners be - lieve: hearts Ie - sus sin - ners does re - ceive. live: they may Je - sus sin - ners does re - ceive. soul re - lieve: Je - sus sin - ners does re - ceive. Oh, how blest it is to know, Now my conscience is at peace, 5 6 were as scarlet my transgression, from the law I stand acquitted. it shall be as white as snow Christ has purchased my release by your blood and bitter passion, and my ev'ry sin remitted.

for these words I do believe:

Jesus sinners does receive.

Naught remains my soul to grieve: Jesus sinners does receive.

Jesus sinners does receive, even I have been forgiven.
And when I this earth must leave, I shall find an open heaven.
Dying, still to him I cleave: Jesus sinners does receive.

Text: Erdmann Neumeister, 1671–1756, abr.; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt. Tune: Neu-verfertigtes Darmstädtisches Gesang-Buch, Darmstadt, 1699 Text and tune: Public domain

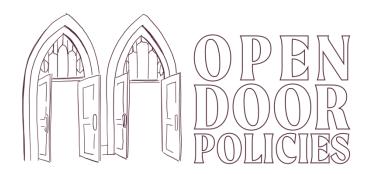
### Stand

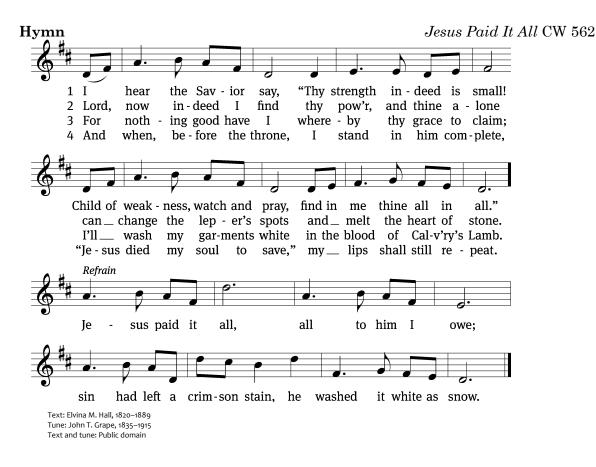
- M: Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C: Amen.

### **Benediction**

- M: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.
- C: Amen.

Be Seated





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#### Psalm 51

Text: Psalter, 1912, alt. Tune: Richard Redhead Text and tune: Public

Savior, When in Dust to You Text: Robert Grant, 1779-1838, abr., alt. Tune: Joseph Parry, 1841-1903 Text and tune: Public domain

# PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Q: What does God tell me about myself in his holy Word?

A: He says that I am a sinner and deserve only his punishment.

Q: What should I do if I am not aware of my sins or am not troubled by them?

A: I should examine myself according to the Ten Commandments and ask how well I have carried out my responsibilities as a husband or wife or single person, as a parent or child, an employer or employee, a teacher or student. Have I loved God with all my heart, gladly heard his Word, and patiently endured affliction? Have I been disobedient, proud, or unforgiving? Have I been selfish, lazy, envious, or quarrelsome? Have I lied or deceived, taken something not mine, or given anyone a bad name? Have I abused my body or permitted indecent thoughts to linger in my mind? Have I failed to do what is right and good?

Q: When I realize that I have sinned against God and deserve his punishment, what should I do?

A: I will confess before God all my sins, those which I remember as well as those of which I am unaware. I will pray to God for his mercy and forgiveness.

Q: How do I receive his gracious forgiveness?

A: His Word assures me that Jesus led a pure and holy life for me and died on the cross for me to pay the full price for all my sins. Through faith in Jesus, I have been clothed in my Savior's perfect righteousness and holiness.

Q: What further assurance do I have that Jesus is mine and I am his?

A: In Holy Communion he gives me his body and blood together with the bread and wine as a truly lifegiving food and drink to unite me with him and my fellow believers. By means of this sacrament, Jesus not only forgives my sins but sweeps away all my doubts about his love for me, gives me his own strength to live a God-pleasing life, and grants me a joyful foretaste of heaven.

Q: How can I be sure that I receive all these blessings in the Lord's Supper?

A: I have his own word spoken as his last will and testament on the night before he died. There he tells me: "Take and eat; this is my body. Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me."

Q: How will I respond to this priceless gift from Jesus?

A: I will daily thank and praise him for his love to me. With his help I will fight temptation, do my best to correct whatever wrongs I have done, and serve him and those around me with love and good works.

Lord Jesus, with joy and gratitude I now come to your table to receive the precious food of your life-giving body and blood. May it strengthen me to remain in you as you remain in me, so that I bear much fruit in devoted service to you and in acts of kindness to others. Amen.

Christian Worship 1993, p. 156 © 1993, NPH, Milwaukee, WI

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