

# Ash Wednesday



“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither  
moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and  
steal.

Matthew 6:20

**February 18, 2026**

**7:00 p.m.**

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Council Bluffs, IA

## **A Note on Ash Wednesday and Lent:**

*"I turned my face to the LORD God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." Daniel 9:3*

The use of "sackcloth and ashes" in biblical times was a way of lamenting one's sins and putting off joy in light of personal or community evils. Penitents would place on their bodies, in some cases, even against their skin, a mesh usually made of goats' hair commonly used for making sacks. This uncomfortable feeling served as a tangible reminder of the grief and discomfort one should feel in light of sin. On the other hand, the use of ashes, at the same time of mourning, reminded the penitent of the mortality of man. In some cases, penitents would even sit on an ash pile, or dump ashes on one's head or throw ashes over one's shoulder. This activity suggests to the penitent that just as the wood was present one day, and turned to ash the next, so also is the life of a mortal.

While the practice of repenting in sackcloth and ashes is sort of a gloomy and depressing notion, it was meant to remind the penitent to cry to the LORD for help. This ancient custom is present today in the practice of the "Imposition of Ashes" at the beginning of our service. A purely voluntary activity, you have the opportunity to participate with the community in the realization of our need to repent of our sins. On the other hand, the ashes placed on your forehead today are in the shape of a cross, reminding us of the purpose of Jesus' coming, including His passion, death and resurrection. Because Jesus has come as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, we can say with the psalmist, *"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing, you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."* Psalm 30:11

*The congregation gathers in silence.*

### **Address**

**P** 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 for Ash Wednesday

**P** O Lord,

**C** **have mercy.**

**P** O Christ,

**C** **have mercy.**

**P** O Lord,

**C** **have mercy.**

**P** O Christ,

**C** **hear us.**

**P** God the Father in heaven,

**C** **have mercy.**

**P** God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

**C** **have mercy.**

**P** God the Holy Spirit,

**C** **have mercy.**

**P** Be gracious to us.

**C** **Spare us, good Lord.**

**P** Be gracious to us.

**C** **Help us, good Lord.**

**P** 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:

**C** **Help us, good Lord.**

**P** In all time of our tribulation;  
in all time of our prosperity;  
in the hour of death;  
and in the day of judgment:

**C** **Help us, good Lord.**

**P** We poor sinners implore You

**C** **to hear us, O Lord.**

**P** To prosper the preaching of Your Word;  
to bless our prayer and meditation;  
to strengthen and preserve us in the true faith;  
and to give heart to our sorrow and strength to our repentance:

**C** **We implore You to hear us, good Lord.**

**P** 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:

**C** We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

**P** To turn our hearts to You;  
to turn the hearts of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers;  
and graciously to hear our prayers:

**C** We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

**P** Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

**C** we implore You to hear us.

**P** Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

**C** have mercy.

**P** Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

**C** have mercy.

**P** Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

**C** grant us Your peace.

**P** O Christ,

**C** hear us.

**P** O Lord,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Christ,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Lord,

**C** have mercy. Amen.

*The congregation comes forward to receive the ashes traced in the form of a cross.*

*Kantorei:*

Text: Stephen P. Starke Setting: Kevin Hildebrand

Now, even now, declare a fast; Turn, humbly turn - renounce your sin; Tear not your robe for guilt amassed But truly rend your heart within!

What shall I bring for daily vice, Proffered before my Maker's eyes? A contrite heart, the sacrifice That You, O God, will not despise.

Ash, only ash I am, O Lord; Dust, and to dust I shall return. Death is my end, my just reward, Solely the wage for sin I earn.

What shall I do? Where ought I go To gain the grace I dearly want? Only to Christ, who will bestow Life from His pure baptismal font.

Drown, sinner, drown beneath its wave; Rise, saint, arise in Christ made new: Live out the life your Savior gave, By words you say and works you do.

*Stand*

**Confession and Absolution**

*LSB 184*

## Introit

*Psalm 57:1–3a, c; antiphon: Liturgical Text*



You have mercy on | all, O Lord,\*

and abhor nothing | you have made.

**You look past the sins of men that they | may repent.\***

**You spare them all because you are our | Lord, our God.**

Be merciful to me, O God, be merci- | ful to me,\*

for in you my soul takes | refuge;

**in the shadow of your wings I will take | refuge,\***

**till the storms of destruction | pass by.**

I cry out to | God Most High,\*

to God who fulfills his pur- | pose for me.

**He will send from heaven and | save me.\***

**God will send out his steadfast love and his | faithfulness!**

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

You have mercy on | all, O Lord,\*

and abhor nothing | you have made.

**You look past the sins of men that they | may repent.\***

**You spare them all because you are our | Lord, our God.**

## Kyrie

*LSB 186*

### Salutation and Collect of the Day

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** **And with thy spirit.**

**P** Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** **Amen.**

*Sit*

### Old Testament Reading

*Jonah 3:1–10*

<sup>1</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>And the people of

Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

<sup>6</sup>The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup>but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Gradual:

*Psalm 57:1a, 3a*

Be merciful to me, O God, be merci- | ful to me,\*  
for in you my soul takes | refuge.  
He will send from heaven and | save me;\*  
he will put to shame him who tramples | on me.

### Epistle

*2 Peter 1:2–11*

<sup>2</sup>May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup>His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup>by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. <sup>5</sup>For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup>and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup>For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*Stand*

## Tract

*Psalms 103:10; 79:8a, 9a*

He does not deal with us according | to our sins,\*  
nor repay us according to our in- | iquities.

Do not remember against us our former in- | iquities;\*  
let your compassion come speedily to | meet us.

Help us, O God of our sal- | vation,\*  
for the glory | of your name.

## Holy Gospel

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

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter.

**C** **Glory be to Thee, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>[Jesus said:] “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>But when 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. . . .

<sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

## Nicene Creed

*LSB 191*

*Sit*

## Hymn of the Day: From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee

**LSB 607**

**Sermon:** "Lay up treasures in heaven."

*Matthew 6:16-21*

*Stand*

**Offertory**

**Note Alternate Tune: LSB 956**

*Sit*

**Offering:** “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”

*Stand*

**Prayer of the Church**

### **Service of the Sacrament**

*We welcome members of our sister congregations of the LCMS to join us in receiving the Lord’s Supper. Other visitors are welcomed forward to receive a blessing. Simply cross your arms to indicate this desire.*

<b>Preface</b>	<i>LSB 194</i>
<b>Proper Preface</b>	
<b>Sanctus</b>	<i>LSB 195</i>
<b>Lord’s Prayer</b>	<i>LSB 196</i>
<b>The Words of Our Lord</b>	<i>LSB 197</i>
<b>Pax Domini</b>	<i>LSB 197</i>
<b>Agnus Dei</b>	<i>LSB 198</i>

*Sit*

Choir: “Savior, When in Dust to Thee”	<i>LSB 419</i>
<b>Hymn: Jesus Sinners Doth Receive</b>	<b>LSB 609</b>
<b>Hymn: A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth</b>	<b>LSB 438</b>
<b>Hymn: Jesus, Priceless Treasure</b>	<b>LSB 743</b>
<b>Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross</b>	<b>LSB 425</b>

*Stand*

<b>Nunc Dimittis</b>	<i>LSB 199</i>
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	<i>LSB 200</i>
<b>Post-Communion Collect</b>	
<b>Salutation</b>	<i>LSB 201</i>
<b>Benedicamus</b>	<i>LSB 202</i>
<b>Benediction</b>	<i>LSB 202</i>

**Hymn of Departure: On My Heart Imprint Your Image** **LSB 422**

**Postlude:** “Der am Kreuz ist meine Liebe" (He on the Cross is my love)  
*Setting by Gottfried August Homilius*

**Acknowledgments**

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book  
Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
Created by Lutheran Service Builder © 2026 Concordia Publishing House.