

Messiah Lutheran Church Mechanicsville, Virginia



February 17, 2021
Ash Wednesday

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*To share the Good News of Jesus Christ
and to invite all to join us in faith, worship, and service.*

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Pastor: The Rev. Ryan Radtke

Church: (804) 746-7134; Email: MessiahMech@gmail.com; Website: MessiahMech.com

Ash Wednesday

February 17, 2021

THE GREETING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray:

C: *Almighty and ever-living 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 receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*

FIRST LESSON: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Lector

A reading from Joel.

Because of the coming day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community declares that God is gracious and asks God to spare the people lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—

²a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
 a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
 nor will be again after them
 in ages to come.

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD,
 return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
 for he is gracious and merciful,

slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD, your God?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation;

assemble the aged;

gather the children,

even infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room,

and the bride her canopy.

¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar

let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.

Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,

and do not make your heritage a mockery,

a byword among the nations.

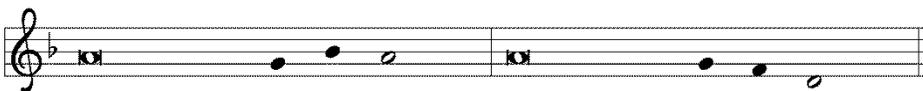
Why should it be said among the peoples,

'Where is their God?' "

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-17



Psalm tone reproduced from *Psalter for Worship Year C* © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.
May be reproduced by permission for local use only.

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your | steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out | my offenses.

²Wash me through and through | from my wickedness,
and cleanse me | from my sin.

³For I know | my offenses,
and my sin is ev- | er before me.

⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil | in your sight;
so you are justified when you speak and right | in your judgment.

⁵Indeed, I was born | steeped in wickedness,

a sinner from my | mother's womb.
⁶Indeed, you delight in truth | deep within me,
 and would have me know wisdom | deep within.
⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I | shall be clean;
 wash me, and I shall be pur- | er than snow.
⁸Let me hear | joy and gladness;
 that the body you have broken | may rejoice.
⁹Hide your face | from my sins,
 and blot out | all my wickedness.
¹⁰Create in me a clean | heart, O God,
 and renew a right spir- | it within me.
¹¹Cast me not away | from your presence,
 and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of | your salvation
 and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.
¹³Let me teach your ways | to offenders,
 and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.
¹⁴Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,
 and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.
¹⁵O Lord, o- | pen my lips,
 and my mouth shall pro- | claim your praise.
¹⁶For you take no delight in sacrifice, or | I would give it.
 You are not pleased | with burnt offering.
¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a | troubled spirit;
 a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will | not despise.

SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10

Lector

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.

^{20b}We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{6:1}As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For 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! ³We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge,

patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

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

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“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.

²“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. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵“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. ⁶But 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.

¹⁶“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. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so 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.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

When is the last time you saw an awareness ribbon? Remember when there used to be a ribbon on every lapel, or a magnet ribbon on every car? They're still around, but I don't see them as much as I used to. There were all sorts of different kinds, different causes, different colors. There are other ways to wear something that raises awareness and shows support, of course – buttons, bumper stickers, hats, clothing. But the ribbons were huge for a long time, and they're still around today.

The first really widespread one was the yellow one, for supporting the troops. There was a black one too, if I remember right, to honor and raise awareness for POWs and MIAs. The next big one was the red ribbon for HIV/AIDS awareness. Maybe you've seen one with puzzle pieces for Autism, or a green one for organ donation, or a pink one for breast cancer awareness. There are hundreds of them. But you know that if you see a ribbon like that it means something, and once it catches your eye, it's a simple matter to ask what that ribbon means and learn more.

Tonight you will be adorned with a cross of ashes on your forehead. It's not a ribbon, or a button, or anything like that, but it's definitely visible, and it definitely means something. That cross of ashes on your forehead is like a hypocrisy awareness and prevention emblem.

A hypocrite is someone who pretends and professes to have certain beliefs and virtues and morals, but that whose actions contradict those stated beliefs and virtues and morals. Someone who says one thing but does another. All of us are kind of hardwired to be hypocrisy detectors; we need to be able to trust the people around us, so we're always on the lookout.

Jesus loves everyone. Period. No question. Not in dispute. He died to save everyone, all of creation. But he really doesn't seem to *like* hypocrites, especially religious hypocrites. Jesus calls out hypocrites on a regular basis, as we just heard in our Gospel reading. And Jesus calls on his followers not to be like them.

Jesus lifts up the three major Jewish practices of piety – giving alms, praying, and fasting – and he uses them to give three examples of, and warnings against, hypocrisy. When you give your alms – that is, your charitable giving for those in need – don't be like the hypocrites, who make sure they are seen and applauded for making those donations. When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who go out and pray on the street corners and in the synagogues to put on a prayer exhibition. When you fast, don't be like the hypocrites who disfigure their faces to make sure everyone knows that they're fasting.

Jesus gives an “instead” each time – instead, carry on these practices in secret...or, in other words, don't make it about yourself. Because it's not about you. Because the point of giving alms, or praying, or fasting, is not about what you're doing, or who is seeing you do it, or how much attention or praise or recognition you get for doing it...the point to these practices is *why* you do

them. You're doing these things in response to God and what God does for, and to, and in, and through you. If you're only doing these things to get attention for doing these things, then you're making it about you. It no longer has anything to do with showing honor to God or increasing awareness for those in need. It's just a publicity stunt, and your professed beliefs of being all about God don't match your actions of being all about yourself. Your acts of piety are just that – an act, a front. You're officially a hypocrite.

The remedy to hypocrisy, to making it all about yourself, is pretty straightforward, if not always easy: return to the Lord your God. That's what the prophet Joel said to do. "Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." Rending your clothing was a very public sign of repentance; Joel says that God would rather you rend your heart, tear open the self-centeredness we succumb to, and God will rebuild it with grace and mercy and steadfast love.

The remedy to hypocrisy, to making it all about yourself, is pretty straightforward, if not always easy: get in tune with God. That's what the apostle Paul said to do. "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." Through the reconciliation and forgiveness of God, Christians become the righteousness of God. We work together with Christ so that our actions are aligned with, and come ever closer to, God's actions. It's not about us; it's about God. As Luther said, "God doesn't need our good works, but our neighbors do." We make it about God by putting the needs of our neighbors ahead of our own, whether we get attention for it or not.

The remedy to hypocrisy, to making it all about yourself, is pretty straightforward, if not always easy: align your heart with God's heart. That's what our Lord Christ said to do. "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." It's not about the earthly rewards or praise or complements or attention or treasures. But since that's where our hearts are too often inclined to turn, return and re-tune and realign with God and God's blessings, where the last are first and the first are last, and with practice your heart will follow.

The remedy to hypocrisy, to making it all about yourself, is pretty straightforward, if not always easy: your very own annual cross of ashes, your hypocrisy awareness and prevention emblem, accompanied by those unsettling words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." You see it on one another; you see it on yourself. And there's no ignoring it – it stands out more than any ribbon ever could. But maybe those words, and that cross of ashes, don't need to be quite so unsettling once they get your

attention. Because, really, all they are saying is that, in the end, we all return to God.

We all return to the God who made us, the God who lovingly crafted us and sculpted us out of the earth, the dirt, the dust, and breathed life into us and called us good. Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return; remember that you are God's, and you return to your Creator. Return to the Lord, be reconciled with God, align yourself with God's heart. Don't be a hypocrite; it will only leave you wanting; just be a child of God. Really, it's just like coming home.

Remember that you are created. That you are finite. That you are mortal. That you are vulnerable. That you are susceptible. Susceptible to viruses and disease and injury, and death. Susceptible to the elements, to ice storms, to cold snaps, to failing power grids. Susceptible to hardship, to recessions, to layoffs, to systems that we are a part of but have no control over. Susceptible to sin, to being hurt, to hurting others, to consequences and exiles. Remember all of these things when you see that cross of ashes, that hypocrisy awareness emblem. And then remember that no amount of attention or recognition or earthly treasures will change any of that. And return to God.

Those ashes are meant to raise our awareness of our own human condition, and our essential need for God. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," is really just a way to remind you to return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." Return to the Lord. Come home.

HYMN OF THE DAY Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling



1 Soft - ly and ten - der - ly Je - sus is call - ing, call - ing for
2 Why should we tar - ry when Je - sus is plead - ing, plead - ing for
3 Oh, for the won - der - ful love he has prom - ised, prom - ised for



you and for me. See, on the por - tals he's wait - ing and watch - ing,
you and for me? Why should we lin - ger and heed not his mer - cies,
you and for me! Though we have sinned, he has mer - cy and par - don,

Refrain



watch - ing for you and for me.
mer - cies for you and for me? "Come home, come home!
par - don for you and for me.



You who are wea - ry, come home." Ear - nest - ly, ten - der - ly,



Je - sus is call - ing, call - ing, "O sin - ner, come home!"

INVITATION TO LENT

Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed. We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

P: Most holy and merciful God,

C: *we confess to you and to one another, and before the whole company of heaven, 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.*

P: 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, O God.*

P: We have shut our ears 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.

C: *Have mercy on us, O God.*

P: Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

C: *Have mercy on us, O God.*

P: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

C: *Have mercy on us, O God.*

P: Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

C: *Have mercy on us, O God.*

P: Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

C: Have mercy on us, O God.

P: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

C: Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

P: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

P: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

C: that we may show forth your glory in the world.

P: By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,

C: bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

P: Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

C: Amen.

PRAYERS

A: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its

ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: O God, you call your church to be ministers of reconciliation throughout the world. Inspire your church in its proclamation of the gospel and guide its ministries to build up the body of Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, and our church as we face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Lord, in your mercy.

C: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

PREFACE

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare

with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**C: *Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.***

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P: Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth. Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood. Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea. Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness to the land of milk and honey. Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one. Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ. Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

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

Again after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: *Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.***

P: O God of resurrection and new life: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence.

C: *Come, Holy Spirit.*

P: Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world. Breathe new life into us. Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

C: *Come, Holy Spirit.*

P: With [name/s and] your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

C: *Amen.*

LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

C: **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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Taste and see that the Lord is good.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

COMMUNION

SONG AFTER COMMUNION Change My Heart, O God



Change my heart, O God; make it ev - er true.



Change my heart, O God; may I be like you.



You are the pot - ter; I am the clay.



Mold me and make me; this is what I pray.

Text: Eddie Espinosa, b. 1953
Music: CHANGE MY HEART, Eddie Espinosa
Text and music © 1982 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing, admin. Music Services

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

LENTEN PRAYER

A: Let us pray. Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

BLESSING

P: Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen

DISMISSAL

A: Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: Thanks be to God.

(Text used by permission of Augsburg Fortress license #11886-S)

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS – ASH WEDNESDAY, February 17, 2021

- Pianist: Debbie Walker
- Lay Assistants: (1st Lay Asst.) Gladys Hubert (2nd Lay Asst.) Marilyn Gunn
- Lectors: Marilyn Gunn
- Acolyte: Ella Anderson
- Ushers: Leroy Albertson, Pat Hubert, Ray Ash, and Jake Addair
- Altar Guild: Becky Collie and Johnnie Collie
