



Jesus: a way in the
WILDERNESS

Wednesday, March 5, 2025
Ash Wednesday



BETHLEHEM
LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org

PRELUDE

Prelude on “Nearer, My God, to Thee”

(BETHANY)

Peter Pindar Stearns
tune, Lowell Mason

On Ash Wednesday we begin Lent, the honest season where we name the reality of our world and the wilderness environments where we find ourselves. This year we focus our attention on Jesus who shows us a way in the wilderness, and reveals God’s faithfulness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love.

GATHERING

| | | |
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| GATHERING HYMN | The Glory of These Forty Days | ELW 320 |
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GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, 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.
Amen.

HEARING GOD’S WORD

READING: Psalm 51:1-17

Psalm 51:1-17 is a penitential psalm that the Hebrew Bible puts in the mouth of King David when he repented of adultery and murder. This magnificent prayer for forgiveness is filled with body imagery and is appropriate for a day in which ashes are placed on our foreheads. The psalm is spoken at Noon and chanted at 7pm.



- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your ¹ steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out ¹ my offenses.
- ² **Wash me through and through ¹ from my wickedness,**
and cleanse me ¹ from my sin.
- ³ For I know ¹ my offenses,
and my sin is ev- ¹ er before me.
- ⁴ **Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil ¹ in your sight;**
so you are justified when you speak and right ¹ in your judgment.
- ⁵ Indeed, I was born ¹ steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my ¹ mother's womb.
- ⁶ **Indeed, you delight in truth ¹ deep within me,**
and would have me know wisdom ¹ deep within.
- ⁷ Remove my sins with hyssop, and I ¹ shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be pur- ¹ er than snow.
- ⁸ **Let me hear ¹ joy and gladness;**
that the body you have broken ¹ may rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face ¹ from my sins,
and blot out ¹ all my wickedness.
- ¹⁰ **Create in me a clean ¹ heart, O God,**
and renew a right spir- ¹ it within me.
- ¹¹ Cast me not away ¹ from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir- ¹ it from me.
- ¹² **Restore to me the joy of ¹ your salvation**
and sustain me with your boun- ¹ tiful Spirit.
- ¹³ Let me teach your ways ¹ to offenders,
and sinners shall be re- ¹ stored to you.
- ¹⁴ **Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of ¹ my salvation,**
and my tongue shall sing ¹ of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ O Lord, o- ¹ pen my lips,
and my mouth shall pro- ¹ claim your praise.
- ¹⁶ **For you take no delight in sacrifice, or ¹ I would give it.**
You are not pleased ¹ with burnt offering.
- ¹⁷ The sacrifice of God is a ¹ troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will ¹ not despise.

READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

Ash Wednesday begins Lent as the acceptable time, the day of salvation, the time to be reconciled to God. During these weeks, the church meditates on what it means that God made Christ to be sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.

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

^{6:1} As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ² For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! ³ We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, ⁹ as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, ¹⁰ as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Christ, you lead and we shall fol - low, stum-bling
though our steps may be; one with you in joy and
sor - row, we the riv - er, you the sea, we the
riv - er, you the sea.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

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

“Beware of practicing your righteousness 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. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so 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. ⁶ 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.

¹⁶“And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ 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.

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

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION

HYMN OF THE DAY

Just a Closer Walk with Thee

ELW 697

INVITATION TO LENT

CONFESSION OF SIN

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hid:

cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If we say we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection

For self-centered living, and for failing to walk with humility and gentleness:
Lord, have mercy on us.

For longing to have what is not ours, and for hearts that are not at rest with ourselves:
Lord, have mercy on us.

For misuse of human relationships, and for unwillingness to see the image of God in others:
Lord, have mercy on us.

For jealousies that divide families and nations, and for rivalries that create strife and warfare:
Lord, have mercy on us.

For reluctance in sharing the gifts of God, and for carelessness with the fruits of creation:
Lord, have mercy on us.

For hurtful words that condemn, and for angry deeds that harm:
Lord, have mercy on us.

For idleness in witnessing to Jesus Christ, and for squandering the gifts of love and grace:
Lord, have mercy on us.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

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.
Amen.

People may come forward to receive the ashes. Ministers mark the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

During this time, please join in singing:

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|---------------------------|---------|
| HYMNS | |
| Take, Oh, Take Me As I Am | ELW 814 |
| Jesus, Remember Me | ELW 616 |

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.
A brief silence.

God of our journeys, we pray for the church as the season of Lent begins. Guide your people in their daily journeys. Strengthen communities of faith in discipleship and witness for the sake of the gospel. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God of creation, we pray for the earth. As you once brought forth life from the dust, breathe healing and renewal into all places where ecosystems are stretched and strained. Nurture organic cycles of life, death, and rebirth. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God of the nations, we pray for an end to wars and occupations that reduce communities to ash. Turn leaders away from fearful decision-making, and lead all people into the justice and compassion of your reign. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God of the suffering, we pray for all who live with any pain. Grant that all who dwell in the dust of grief may know your presence there. Comfort people living with chronic or terminal illnesses, addictions, or anxiety, especially those we name before you now.

God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor.

If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.

OFFERING

Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry.

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Noon Service:

Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus
(LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN)

Paul Manz
tune, *from* German hymnal, 1653

Evening Service:

There Is a Balm in Gilead

African American spiritual

OFFERTORY



Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Gracious Provider,
you give us all that we need: faithfulness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and love and open your heart to the world. As we prepare to feast on your bounty, deepen our commitment to sharing those provisions with others, through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is food and drink for the journey. Take and be filled.

Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.

THE COMMUNION

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the

To repeat
world, have mer - cy on us.

Last time
world, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN AND MUSIC

Around You, O Lord Jesus

Diapason Movement

(from *Old English Organ Music for Manuals*, Vol. II)

ELW 468

William Boyce

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and sustained us with your very self. Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities, that your loving presence might nourish the world, in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

May God who calls us to travel along new paths and through unknown perils fill us with faith and courage, and may ☩ Christ's hand lead us in love, and support us each step of the way by the power of the Spirit.

Amen.

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| SENDING HYMN | Be Thou My Vision | ELW 793 |
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DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Jesus walks with you.

Thanks be to God!

During the season of Lent we omit the Postlude and provide space for silence and reflection following worship. Please honor this time of meditation by moving conversations outside of the sanctuary.

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

We welcome you to this solemn service of worship that begins the season of Lent. Each Wednesday throughout the season of Lent, a simple one-pot meal will be served each Wednesday from 6-6:45 pm in the fellowship hall, followed by worship at 7 pm. If you are visiting, please introduce yourself to one of the pastors – they would love to greet you personally!

Thank you to all those who participated in worship! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with Alli O'Malley or one of the pastors following worship or contact Alli directly at volunteersupport@blcfairport.org.

Communicate with us: Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

What's happening at BLC this week? Visit the Calendar of Events at www.blcfairport.org. Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at office@blcfairport.org or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

Church office hours: Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org.

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NRSVue Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education
Of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.
Prelude on "Nearer, My God, to Thee", Tune: BETHANY - Lowell Mason
Music: Peter Pindar Stearns, © 1972 Coburn Press (admin. Theodore Presser Company)
"Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus", Tune: LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN, Music: Paul Manz
© 1980, 1989, 2011 Birnamwood Publications (ASCAP)
"There Is a Balm in Gilead", Music: African American spiritual, Music: Marty Haugen, from Mass of Creation
© 1984, 1985, 2010, GIA Publications, Inc.
Diapason Movement – from Old English Organ Music for Manuals, Vol. II
Music: William Boyce, © Oxford University Press, 1966

Hypocrites in Good Company

Critics of Christianity often point out that Christians are hypocrites. Christians publicly espouse a certain set of rules for living—including care for creation, serving God and neighbors in need, and loving our enemies—and, just as publicly, fail to live up to those rules every day and in every way.

Pastor Tony Campolo often tells the story of people who say they don't want to go to church because of all the hypocrites. He reassures them that they should feel right at home. Church is for real people, and real people fail to do and say the right things—real people are hypocrites. Campolo argues that the Christian ideal is to know you're a hypocrite and earnestly work at being less hypocritical.

All the same, we don't want to be hypocrites or show-offs. We question the motives behind our public and private spiritual practices; we question our neighbors' motives too. In today's gospel we hear about fasting cheerfully and praying in secret. And yet, as we leave the church building we bear a public and very noticeable sign of faith right on our foreheads. Lent begins with a bold, visible, unmistakable reminder of who we are: simultaneously mortal dust and baptized children of God. Simultaneously saint and sinner. Simultaneously hypocrites and earnest, hopeful Christians.