

Ash Wednesday – 2024

Wednesday, February 14 at 11 am & 7 pm



**Then Honor  
the Lord!**

Text: Joel 2:12-19; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 NAS 1995

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: As we begin this Season of Lent, ***we focus on God's call to repent*** – to admit our sins, have godly sorrow for our sins, look to Jesus for forgiveness, and go and sin no more!

**OLD TESTAMENT:** Joel 2:12-19

**About 2,800 years ago:** The northern kingdom of Israel was living in grave sin, so the LORD sent Joel ✓ *to tell the people about the coming devastation* and ✓ *to call the people to earnestly repent*. His ancient call applied **to** then, **to** now, and **to** all people everywhere!

**As we pick up the reading in 2:12, Joel earnestly calls the people to repent:** <sup>12</sup> “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; <sup>13</sup> And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. <sup>14</sup> Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

- ➔ **“...rend your heart and not your garments”** – In other words, may our sorrow for sin be deep inside – *a heart-tearing sorrow*, that is looking **to Jesus** for forgiveness and **to the Holy Spirit** to live a new life!

<sup>15</sup> Blow a trumpet in Zion, **Consecrate a fast** [call the people to abstain from work, food, and sexual relations], proclaim a solemn assembly, <sup>16</sup> Gather the people, **sanctify** [set apart] the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

- ➔ **Notice who is included:** *Everyone!* The old, the infants, and everyone in between! Even the newlyweds are called to postpone their honeymoon to assemble, fast, and repent! How is the Holy Spirit nudging you to repent?

<sup>17</sup> Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

- ➔ **Sincere and extreme:** The LORD's spiritual leaders were called to understand the horror of the promised judgment, and to call out to the LORD on behalf of the people with tears of sincerity! Since all believers have the LORD's ear through Jesus, *let us cry out to Him on behalf of all sinners!*

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people. <sup>19</sup> The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied *in full* with them; And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

- ➔ **"Then"** – In other words, after godly sorrow and trust in the Lord! *Let us be and remain in those categories!*

**HYMN:** *Christ, the Life of All the Living* LSB 420, stanzas 4-5

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

Jesus spoke these words during His preaching of the Sermon on the Mount. *Let us understand them and apply them!*

## **Giving to the Poor:**

<sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your **righteousness** [*doing of what is right*] before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. <sup>2</sup> So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

<sup>3</sup> “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.”

- ➔ When doing right, *like giving to the poor*, let us do it with thanksgiving – *recognizing the abundance we have been given!* Also, let us do it in secret – *keeping it from others and keeping no record for ourselves!* When we help those who cannot repay us AND we do so in secret, *our Father in heaven will reward us!*

## **Praying:**

<sup>5</sup> “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

<sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

- ➔ We should never pray for the purpose of being seen by others. Instead, let us **gladly** talk to God, **pour** our hearts out to Him, and **do** so in secret. Then, let us be confident that He has heard us, and He will answer. Then, *let us patiently wait and embrace His reply!*

## **Fasting:**

<sup>16</sup> “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they neglect their appearance so that they will

be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. <sup>17</sup> But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face [*get cleaned up and looking good on the outside*] <sup>18</sup> so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.”

- ➔ On the outside – *let’s look like we are feeling fine, though we are hungry!* On the inside – *let’s have our focus on Jesus and all He gave up for our salvation!*

### **Treasures:**

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

- ➔ May we value *the eternal things of heaven* MUCH MORE than *the temporal things of this world!* When we do so, then, **what we treasure the most** will be stored safe and secure in heaven!

**Conclusion:** The Holy Week Journey! *Begin reading your booklet today.* Copies are available in the Narthex and online ([click here](#)).

Over the next 40 days, the readings in the booklet will become the basis for 14 sermons – *starting this coming Saturday and Sunday.*

Join us as we focus on Holy Week – the **most horrible** and **most wonderful** week in the history of the world!

**Let Us Pray:** Father in heaven, You know every heart, so help us to always be ♣sincere in our godly sorrow, ♣true in our trust in Jesus, ♣secretive in our giving, ♣private in our praying, ♣Jesus-focused in our fasting, and ♣eternity-focused with our treasures! In Jesus’ name!

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