

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Wednesday, March 6th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Ash Wednesday
Psalm 51

Welcome

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
every year at Easter,
during the time of the "Christian Passover,"
we celebrate our redemption
through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration
and to practice with discipline daily repentance,
our daily dying and rising in union with Christ.
We begin this season
by acknowledging our need for repentance
and for the mercy and forgiveness
proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Announcements

Ashes

Call to Worship

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration

God of mercy and mystery,
 You are Light of true light and Truth of deepest truth.
 We find peace in your perfection and courage in your strength;
 we find wisdom in your truth and hope is your steadfast love.
 You are our beginning and our end,
 the first and the last,
 the forgiver and redeemer of all things.
 We worship you now,
 Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit,
 Creator, Redeemer, and Guide,
 one God, now and forever. Amen.

Opening Hymn

Call to Confession

Genuine repentance involves two things:
 the dying-away of the old self and the coming-to-life of the new.
 The dying-away of the old self is to be genuinely sorry for sin,
 to hate it more and more, and to run away from it.
 The coming-to-life of the new self
 is wholehearted joy in God through Christ
 and a delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to.
 Together, as Christ's body, we now confess our sin
 and express our longing to live in joyful obedience to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty, all-knowing God,
 you love your people and your whole creation.
 You forgive all who turn to you in confession.
 In your holy presence,
 we acknowledge the brokenness of this world
 and the brokenness in our relationships.
 Forgive all the ways in which failed to offer others
 the love and mercy you offer us.
 Forgive both the things we have done
 and the things we have left undone.
 Create in us clean hearts
 and renew a good and right spirit within us
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,**

**who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and always. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Rest assured people of God that
Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.
He was wounded for our transgressions
and bruised for our iniquities.
Upon him was the chastisement
that makes us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd
and gather the lambs in his arms

Prayer for illumination

Holy God, create a quiet space deep within us so we can attend to your Word very closely.
Send the Holy Spirit to work in us
so that we may we see you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly
day by day by day. Amen

Scripture

Psalm 51

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

51 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN NATHAN THE PROPHET WENT TO HIM, AFTER HE HAD GONE IN TO BATHSHEBA.

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions,

and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;

¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Every Christians knows of Christmas, they all celebrate Christmas, it is a time of happiness and joy. In fact, so much so that the happiness and joy often overshadow the Christianness of Christmas. We have Christmas specials, Christmas foods, Christmas music and Christmas holidays, Christmas has become an entity of its own in our modern culture. Christians and Non-Christians both equally look forward to the season, albeit for different reasons at least in theory.

Lent is different. There are no Lenten specials on TV, no Lenten foods, or holidays that we all look forward too. There are no live Lenten actors in the malls dressed in sack clothes and ashes. Lent is instead a time Christians are called to remember their brokenness. To remember those things which grieve God, and this confuses the modern world. They cannot understand why we would have a day on which we celebrate the recognition of our sinful nature and the truth that we will die one day, yet that is what Ash Wednesday is all about.

Sin is a word we do not discuss enough in the modern faith. It has become a hush word, one that is spoken in secret almost. Sin was used by the Roman Catholic church to control the masses and it is as if the modern Christian church seeks to separate themselves from the word itself. Plus, if we do not talk about sin, we do not have to recognize it in ourselves and can move through our lives happily living as we wish and still believing we have salvation.

We believe that sin is avoidable, that if we live a good and moral life by worldly standards we have been saved. We boil sin down to something we can control, we can dictate, so that we can check it off on our lists as something we do not do.

Yet the reality is that sin is part of who we are. It is ever present in our lives, and we need to obey the truths of the scripture, recognizing our own sinful nature and the truth that we need Jesus to be saved.

Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, described sin as 'Incurvatus in se' – Latin for 'an inward curve to self.' Not a harsh corner, but instead a subtle curve. The slight modification of God's truths just so we can justify ourselves, not a radical altering because that is too obvious. It is that inward curve that leads us to self-protection and self-promotion instead of giving of self.

This is our biggest challenge in life, battling this inward curve to self. We battle it in relationships with friends and at work, in marriage, in parenting, in psychology and in spirituality. That slow curve of thought that tells us it is all about us, that we should live the way we want, that we deserve to live the way we want and to be happy with ourselves.

This is what happened to David, He was all powerful, hanging out on his rooftop and he spots this incredibly beautiful woman, and he desires her. He thinks well I am the King

after all, God has blessed me, he wants me to be happy, to have good things, to have the things I desire. So, he gives into that inward curve to self and Sins by taking Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah and she becomes pregnant.

Uriah is a soldier in David's armies, so he once again listens to that inward curve, he tries to cover up his sin by calling him home to report on the war. However, Uriah spends all his time with David, not returning home to his wife. This makes it impossible for David to cover up his sin. So, he listens to that inward curve again, and this time he orders Uriah be sent to the frontlines, where he will be killed. He goes so far as to tell his General to put Uriah where the fighting is fiercest and then withdraw so he is left alone and killed, and that is what happens.

David then marries the widow Bathsheba, and his inward curve tells him all is well, his sin has gone unnoticed.

That is until Nathan appears.

2 Samuel 12:1-6

12 And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." ⁵Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, ⁶and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

David's anger at this horrible act is evident. Then Nathan looks King David in the eye and tells him, that he is that man. He is the one who took Bathsheba and killed Uriah, he is the rich man of the story.

This is the reasoning behind Psalm 51. When confronted with the truth of his sin, he preserved it so that others would learn from his mistakes, other would see how the great king and sinned and how he reacted to his sin as a lesson for them in how to respond to their own sinful nature, their own inward curve.

King David begins with confession.

Psalm 51: 1-6

¹ **Have mercy on me, O God,**

**according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.**

**² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!**

**³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.**

**⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.**

**⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

**⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.**

Why does he confess his sins to God? God has known about David's sins all along, the difference is that now David is aware of his Sin. He sees his inward curve, his focus on self and the damage it has done in his life and the lives of others. He understands the truth of the debt owed by his sin and the weight of that sins weighs heavily on his soul.

His confession to God is an acknowledgement for his part in the sin, to openly admit his fault, to release the guilt and to grant himself some relief by admitting his inward curve to himself and to God. His admission of his sin helps put him back into a right relationship with God whom he had sinned against. David is admitting that God knows best, even when it goes against his desires.

This is one of the problems of the modern world. Many people are like David when he desired Bathsheba, they think they know better than God. They give into that inward curve, modifying scripture to suit their desires. They know what they are doing is wrong, but do it anyway, after all, no one is really getting hurt.

It is not until they recognize their sin, that inward curve, that self-desire, self-protection, self-promotion, that they realize someone was hurt. God is hurt! And they are hurt as well by that separation from God and his truths. Then they need to start as David did with Confession, the first step to reconciliation with God.

In his confession about his sins, David seeks God's grace, mercy, compassion, and love.

Psalm 51:7-9

**⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

**⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.**

**9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.**

Sin makes you feel dirty. It makes you feel unworthy, it eats away at you making you want to hide it from the world and those around you. Therefore, David seeks God's grace, God's ability to make him clean again. David calls for cleansing with Hyssop. It was Hyssop and the blood of a lamb that was used to mark the doors of the Israelites during the very first Passover. It will be a hyssop branch that the soldiers attach a vinegar-soaked sponge to offer to Jesus on the cross. Hyssop is the symbol of the inward cleansing that God gives his people. David knows that it is only God who can forgive him, only God who can make him clean.

The good news of easter is we go through the season of lent, acknowledging the truth of our sin, our inward curve, but at the end, we have Good Friday. God cleanses all who believe in him through his sacrifice on the cross and the debt of blood that was paid there. The good news is that the scarlet stains of our sins are washed white as snow. It is not until we recognize the depth of our sin that we can begin to truly understand the grace and mercy of our salvation.

David understands the depth of his sin and the grace and mercy of God, and for this reason he cannot stop there. He knows that his sin, his inward curve will always draw him to focus on himself. So, he asks God to help re-create him, to change his inward curve.

Psalm 51- 10-12

**10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.**

**11 Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

**12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

This is the process of Sanctification. The transfiguration of who we are into someone new. The metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. The change in a Christian from a sinner with no recognition of what they are doing, to a Christian who struggles with their sin and seeks to overcome those things which cause harm in their lives, in the lives of others and in their relationship with God.

David is admitting his sin, admitting his mistakes, and asking God to re-create him. To repair that inward curve and once again put him on the straight path to God. He is not focused on the mistakes he has made, the sins he has done. Instead, he is asking God to create in him a pure heart which can be used in the present and in the future to glorify God.

This is the challenge for many. Many of us can admit our sins to God. We are all willing to accept God's grace and mercy in his forgiveness of the debts we owe because of our sin. But how willing are we to go through the process of re-creation, the process of changing who we were into the person Christ wants us to become. This is where many stumble. They want to keep

living life as they have been. They want to Sin any way they wish and be forgiven, but not have to change.

This is the full course of repentance that Christ calls for in the Bible. It is not just admitting sins and receiving grace. It is actively engaging the sin in our lives, actively fighting against our inward curves, our self-desire, self-protection, self-promotion and focusing our lives of Christ. Changing who we were into who he is calling for us to become. This is why James calls a faith without works a dead faith. If we are not doing something, if we are not changing in some way, how are we faithful believers in Christ and His teachings?

Repentance – The act of turning that inward curve outward. Repentance is the understanding that he who gives up his life is the one who gains it.

Lent is not a season of giving things up to show God, we love him. It is a season we give ourselves to God in recognition of what he has given to us in his love, grace, mercy, and compassion. It is a season where the truth of who we are, sinners, and the great mercy and grace he has upon us should be present in our daily lives.

It is a reminder that those who wish to save their eternal lives must first confess, cleanse, and recreate, they need to repent by giving their very lives up to God.

Let us pray,

We Seek Our Comfort Only in Your Mercy

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 guide and direct us by your Holy Spirit,
 that we may not forget our sins and be filled with pride,
 but continue in daily repentance and renewal,
 seeking our comfort only
 in the blessed knowledge
 that you will be merciful to us,
 forgive us our sins
 and grant us eternal life;
 through your beloved Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549

Imposition of Ashes

The early followers of Jesus observed the days of Jesus' passion and resurrection with various acts of devotion. It became their custom to prepare to celebrate the great mystery of Easter with a season of prayer, contemplation, and fasting.

Let us begin our observance of Lent with a time of self-examination and repentance. Then let us continue through the season with prayer and fasting, reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

We begin in silence as we listen to God's call on our lives for this season of Lent.

Together let us give the Litany of Penitence;

*Holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth,
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.*

*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.*

Have mercy on us, O God.

*We have not listened 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.*

Have mercy on us, O God.

*We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness:
The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,*

we confess to you, O God.

*Our self-indulgent appetites and ways
and our exploitation of other people,*

we confess to you, O God.

*Our anger at our own frustration
and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,*

we confess to you, O God.

*Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts,
and our dishonesty in daily life and work,*

we confess to you, O God.

*Our negligence in prayer and worship,
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,*

we confess to you, O God.

*Accept our repentance, O God,
for the wrongs we have done.
For our neglect of human need and suffering
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,*

accept our repentance, O God.

*For all false judgments,
for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors,
and for our prejudice and contempt
toward those who differ from us,*

accept our repentance, O God.

*For our waste and pollution of your creation
and our lack of concern for those who come after us,*

accept our repentance, O God.

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

**Favorably hear us, O God,
for your mercy is great**

Almighty God, you have created us from the dust of the earth.
Let these ashes be a sign of our mortality, penitence, and humility.
Remind us it is only by your grace and love
that we receive everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Step forward if you would like to receive the ashes

As you mark on each person:

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

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

That we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of our Savior,

**bring us with all your saints
to the joy of Christ's resurrection**

Hymn

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

Closing Hymn

Pastoral Prayer

Holy and merciful God,
we confess that the world is not as you created it to be.
Hear our prayers for the world and for one another:
In this world and in our lives, our love is imperfect and often fails.
Help us to love you with our whole heart, mind, and strength;
and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

In this world and in our lives, we have been deaf to your call to serve.
Strengthen us to be of service to those in need
with a spirit of generosity and kindness.
Equip us to join with others to build a kingdom of grace in the world you love.

In this world and in our lives,
anger, pride, and impatience hinder the vibrant, life-giving relationships
you desire for us all.
Through your tender mercy, restore our broken souls and broken communities
and heal our relationships with one another.

In this world and in our lives,
self-indulgence, envy, and greed contribute to the exploitation of others.
Open our eyes to the effects of our actions on the earth and all its people,
and give us courage to work for justice when we see it is lacking.

In this world and in our lives,
false judgment, prejudice, fear, and contempt for others degrade human life.
Stir in our hearts so we can recognize that all humanity is created in your image.
Inspire us to treat others with reverence for the life you have given us all.

In this world and in our lives,
waste and pollution destroy your creation.
The lifestyles we have chosen threaten the very earth you made.
Challenge us to become better stewards of the earth
for your glory and for the future of those who come after us.

We offer these prayers and the unspoken prayers of our hearts

in the name of Jesus Christ, whose blood paid the debt of our sins. Amen

Benediction

May God the Father bless you,
God the Son heal you,
God the Holy Spirit give you strength.
May God the holy and undivided Trinity
guard your body, save your soul,
and bring you safely to his heavenly country,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.