

CC, SB, Merlin, TS, and TQ Pastoral Charges

Ash Wednesday – February 14th, 2024

at St. Andrew's United Church at 10 am.

Ministers: Kim Gilliland and Susan Scaman

Prelude: “Precious Lord” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning! I invite you to get yourself a small bowl of lukewarm water for this service.

Welcome to Ash Wednesday – The start of the Season of Lent. This service is designed to get our attention and bump us out of complacency and into self-reflection. We are stripped back to the essentials, for the journey ahead to rebuild our character, strength and resolve. Enjoy!

A few announcements about upcoming Easter Services:

- Faith Talk – Wednesday Mornings at 10 am at the Kitchen in Charing Cross
- Maundy Thursday – Charing Cross United Church at 7 pm.
- Good Friday – Talbot Street United Church at 10:30 am. Come at 10 am for coffee and hot cross buns.
- Easter SONRise Service: Pardoville at 6:30 am. Park in “Pardovilla’s” Parking Lot.
- Easter SONRise Breakfast: St. Luke’s at 7:30 am. Freewill Offering with the proceeds offered to Mission & Service.
- Easter Service: March 31st, with communion.

Continue to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca . Also check out Charing Cross’ Face Book page for their services and announcements.

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call To Worship:

Eric: Blow the trumpet! Sound the alarm!

People: We return to God.

Eric: Gather the people! Assemble the aged! Gather the children!

People: We return to God.

Eric: Return to God with all your heart. For God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

People: We return to God with all our heart.

Video: Annette burning the palms into ashes

Hymn: VU 108 "Sunday's Palms are..."

- 1 Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes
as another Lent begins;
thus we kneel before our Maker
in contrition for our sins.
We have marred baptismal pledges,
in rebellion gone astray;
now, returning, seek forgiveness;
grant us pardon, God, this day!

- 3 We are hasty to judge others,
blind to proof of human need;
and our lack of understanding
demonstrates our inner greed;
we have wasted earth's resources;
want and suffering we've ignored;
come and cleanse us, then restore us;
make new hearts within us, Lord!

Liturgy of the Ashes:

Eric: When we burn away all that we are and all that we have, when we burn away all that we think and feel, when we burn away all attachment and ego, we are reduced to this (*indicate ashes*).

People: Carbon, dust, ash. It has no form and very little substance. It is virtually nothing. And yet, out of the ashes can come new life. Will you let it all fall away? Will you let it burn?

Eric: Will you reduce yourself to nothing, so that God can do something new with you?

Responsive Reading: Psalm 51 - by Bill and Shawna Foster

A Prayer for Forgiveness

You are kind, God! Please have pity on me. You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins.

Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.

I know about my sins, and I cannot forget my terrible guilt.

You are really the one I have sinned against; I have disobeyed you and have done wrong. So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me.

I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.

But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom.

Wash me with hyssop until I am clean and whiter than snow.

Let me be happy and joyful! You crushed my bones, now let them celebrate.

Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt.

Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again.

Don't chase me away from you or take your Holy Spirit away from me.

Make me as happy as you did when you saved me; make me want to obey!

I will teach sinners your Law, and they will return to you.

Keep me from any deadly sin. Only you can save me! Then I will shout and sing about your power to save.

Help me to speak, and I will praise you, Lord.

Offerings and sacrifices are not what you want. The way to please you is to feel sorrow deep in our hearts.

This is the kind of sacrifice you won't refuse.

Please be willing, Lord, to help the city of Zion and to rebuild its walls.

Then you will be pleased with the proper sacrifices, and we will offer bulls on your altar once again.

Eric: When we burn away all we have done, that we ought not to have done, when we burn away all we have not done that we ought to have done, when we burn away all that is not love, our hearts are ready to return to God.

Hymn: VU 508 "Just As I Am"

- 1 Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

- 4 Just as I am, thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down;
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6: 1 – 6, 16 – 21 by Janet Leppek

When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to the poor, don't blow a loud horn. That's what show-offs do in the meeting places and on the street corners, because they are always looking for praise. I can assure you that they already have their reward. When you give to the poor, don't let anyone know about it. Then your gift will be given in secret. Your Father knows what is done in secret, and he will reward you. When you pray, don't be like those show-offs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I can assure you that they already have their reward. When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you. When you go without eating, don't try to look gloomy as those show-offs do when they go without eating. I can assure you that they already have their reward. Instead, comb your hair and wash your face. Then others won't know that you are going without eating. But your Father sees what is done in private, and he will reward you. Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Kim: We invite you to come forward and dip your fingers into the water in the Baptismal Fount and make a sign of the cross in the palm of your other hand. The water reminds us of our baptism, and in baptism we are forgiven.

Susan: Then come to the ashes, where we will mark the "sign of the cross", either on the back of your hand or on your forehead. You are welcome to say the phrase from Psalm 51, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Let this be our prayer to begin the journey of Lent...the journey of our return to God.

Kim: We begin this journey of our return to God marked with a symbol of great humility – ashes to ashes and dust to dust, from dust we have come and to dust we shall return. It's like looking at the night sky full of stars and realizing how small and insignificant our lives seem by comparison to the vastness of the universe. We start by returning to a sense of our rightful place in the grand scheme of things.

Susan: And yet, we begin this journey because we are invited. We are recognized as part of this vastness, and God calls us to play our part in the very grand scheme that lies before us. Our rightful place is to be in relationship with God and God's creation, to be engaged in this beautiful, troubled world. So we begin this journey with humility and great confidence.

Kim: Hear these words of the apostle Paul, read by Alice. This is a glimpse into the journey of those early Christians who came before us.

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 5: 20 to 6: 10 by Alice Dale

We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God. We work together with God, and we beg you to make good use of God's kindness to you. In the Scriptures God says, "When the time came, I listened to you, and when you needed help, I came to save you." That time has come. This is the day for you to be saved. We don't want anyone to find fault with our work, and so we try hard not to cause problems. But in everything and in every way we show that we truly are God's servants. We have always been patient, though we have had a lot of trouble, suffering, and hard times. We have been beaten, put in jail, and hurt in riots. We have worked hard and have gone without sleep or food. But we have kept ourselves pure and have been understanding, patient, and kind. The Holy Spirit has been with us, and our love has been real. We have spoken the truth, and God's power has worked in us. In all our struggles we have said and done only what is right. Whether we were honored or dishonored or praised or cursed, we always told the truth about ourselves. But some people said we did not. We are unknown to others, but well known to you. We seem to be dying, and yet we are still alive. We have been punished, but never killed, and we are always happy, even in times of suffering. Although we are poor, we have made many people rich. And though we own nothing, everything is ours.

Eric: During this hymn, you are invited to sing along, hum along or sit quietly and absorb the music. We invite you to think of a struggle or hardship in your life, or a struggle or hardship in the life of the world.

Hymn: VU 575 "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"

- 1 I'm gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
- 2 I'm gonna work so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna work so God can use me

anywhere, Lord, anytime!

- 3 I'm gonna pray so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna pray so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
- 4 I'm gonna sing so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna sing so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

Prayer: based on Isaiah 58:1–12

People: Loving God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, we return to you with all our heart. See, we have marked ourselves with a sign. We are the ones who will loose the bonds of injustice. We are the ones who will undo the thongs of the yoke. We break every yoke. Let your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing spring up quickly. Guide us, satisfy us, make us strong. Amen.

Blessing:

Eric: God, you called to the chaos, and it became order and the universe and everything that exists sprang into life. In Christ, you call us through the water in baptism. On our journey through Lent from life to death to life once more, travel with us, God. Mark us with the ash of the earth; life become death to nurture life again. As we fast, make us hungry for a world where no one goes without. When we give, may we give for the peace of Earth. And may we always and everywhere pray with humble and grateful hearts. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, who goes before us forever loving as you love. Amen.

Postlude: “Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley” – Christie Coatsworth