

ASH WEDNESDAY
First Presbyterian Church, Palatka, FL,
February 18, 2026

PRELUDE

Tommy Clay, Jr.

OPENING SENTENCES

God sent Christ into the world not to condemn the world that the world might be saved through him

God's love endures forever.

God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble.
Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

God's love endures forever.

GATHERING PRAYER

Almighty God, you despise nothing you have made and you forgive the sins of all who turn to you. Create in us new and contrite hearts, that truly repenting of our sins and acknowledging our brokenness we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

HYMN

“Spirit of the Living God”

Hymn #288

Spirit of the living God, Fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, Fall afresh on me.
Melt me; mold me; fill me; use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE

<i>First Reading</i>	Joel 2:1-2. 12-17	p.650, OT
<i>Second Reading</i>	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	p.139, NT
<i>Gospel Reading</i>	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21	p.4, NT

Joel 2:1-2. 12-17 P. 650, OT

2 Blow 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—
2 a 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.

¹² Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,
and relenting from punishment.

¹⁴ Who 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?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion;

consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶ gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her canopy.

¹⁷ Between 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?’ ”

Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 P.139, NT

²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; 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 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.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 P.4, NT

6 “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. “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.

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.

MESSAGE “Don’t Fool Yourself” Terry Albright

INVITATION TO OBSERVE A HOLY LENT

PSALM 51

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 alone, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.

5 Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

6 You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my 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 crushed rejoice.

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

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

11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

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

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

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

16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

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

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

LITANY OF PENANCE

Holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another and the whole communion of the 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 and 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 has served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We confess to you, O God, our past unfaithfulness. For the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

Have mercy on us, O God.

For our self indulgent appetites and way, and our exploitation of other people,

Have mercy on us, O God.

For our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, our dishonesty in daily work, our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

Have mercy on us, O God.

For our neglect of human need and suffering, our indifference to injustice and cruelty, for false judgments and uncharitable thoughts toward neighbors, for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

Have mercy on us, O God.

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

Have mercy on us, O God.

Restore us, O God of our salvation, and show us your steadfast love. **Turn to us in your mercy and redeem us.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence, for it is only by your gracious gift we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Remember that we are dust, and to dust we 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.

BLESSING AND CHARGE

POSTLUDE

Tommy Clay, Jr.