

“Father, forgive them”

Words from the Cross

a lenten sermon series on the 7 last words of Christ



February 18, 2026, 7:00 pm

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Ash Wednesday

✠ We rise in body or spirit.

We say words in bold together.

GATHERING

Prelude

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Silent Prayer of Preparation by Ruth C. Duck

Creating God, still Center of the world you have made, we come to you in this season of turning and returning. We do not know how to seek you with our whole hearts, but we know you are our source and our destiny. In the midst of life, we return to you, we turn toward you. We thank you that you receive even the broken heart, the troubled conscience, the conflicted spirit. May we seek you each day, honoring you in all we say and do, both what is seen and what is hidden, through Jesus Christ, our path homeward to you. Amen.

Call to Worship based on liturgy by Lisa Frenz

Natasha Taylor

Into the silence of the void the Creator spoke, and the world came into being.

**God made light from the shadows, matter from nothing,
flesh from dust.**

In the quiet of a small town in Palestine, the Word of God came to us.

Jesus our Christ lived and walked among us,

speaking the words of life.

In the stillness of our souls, the Spirit of God continues to whisper,
Calling us back to the Creator, back to our Savior, back to the wholeness that God has intended for us from the very start.

Wrapped in the peace of God's everlasting mercy and love, let us worship.

✠Hymn 415

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

*Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love, and power.*

Refrain *I will arise and go to Jesus; he will embrace me in his arms.
In the arms of my dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms.*

*Come, ye thirsty, come, and welcome; God's free bounty glorify,
true belief and true repentance, every grace that brings you nigh. [Refrain]*

*Come, ye weary, heavy laden, lost and ruined by the fall;
if you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all. [Refrain]*

*Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream;
all the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him. [Refrain]*

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading: *Luke 23:33-38*

p. 108 in the pew Bible

Anthem

Create in Me
based on Psalm 51

Michael Burkhardt

Scripture Reading: *Joel 2:1-2, 12-17*

p. 1037 in the pew Bible

Holy wisdom, holy word. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

All Apologies

Rev. Elizabeth Lovell Milford

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

✠Hymn 688

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart

*Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
and make me love thee as I ought to love.*

*I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
no sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening skies;
but take the dimness of my soul away.*

*Hast thou not bid us love thee, God and King;
all, all thine own, soul, heart, and strength, and mind?
I see thy cross; there teach my heart to cling.
O let me seek thee, and O let me find!*

*Teach me to feel that thou art always nigh.
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
to check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh.
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*

*Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,
one holy passion filling all my frame;
the baptism of the heaven descended Dove,
my heart an altar, and thy love the flame.*

Invitation to Observe a Holy Lent

Litany of Penitence and the Lord's Prayer

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. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. 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 unfaithfulness. For the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives. For the ways in which we have become self-absorbed. For our waste and pollution of your creation. For our negligence in prayer and worship and half-hearted lives of faith. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven. We have acted in ways that tear down rather than build up your kingdom. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

We confess to you, O God, the ways in which we have sinned against others. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty. For all false judgments, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

We have not listened to your call to serve as Christ served us but have tried to do it all ourselves. Our hearts and minds have been closed to the movement of your Holy Spirit. **Have mercy on us, O God.**

We confess to you, O God, all that is in our hearts this night, and leave space in silence for those things we are afraid to speak, do not dare name, or are not even aware of ourselves . . . *silent confession*

Hymn 577 *Lord, Have Mercy*
The choir will sing in Latin and in English, then the congregation will follow.
Ky-ri-e e-le-i-son, Ky-ri-e e-le-i-son,
Ky-ri-e e-le-i-son, Ky-ri-e e-le-i-son.
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Restore us, O God of our salvation, and show us your steadfast love. Turn to us in your mercy and redeem us, through the love of your son and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray together:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

✠Imposition of Ashes

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Genesis 3:19)

*Please come forward as the Spirit leads you
to receive the sign of the cross on your forehead or on your hand.*

Words of Assurance

SENDING

✠Hymn 434 *Restore in Us, O God*
Restore in us, O God, the splendor of your love;
renew your image in our hearts, and all our sins remove.

*O Spirit, wake in us the wonder of your power;
from fruitless fear unfurl our lives like springtime bud and flower.*

*Bring us, O Christ, to share the fullness of your joy;
baptize us in the risen life that death cannot destroy.*

*Three-personed God, fulfill the promise of your grace,
that we, when all our searching ends, may see you face to face.*

✠Blessing and Charge

Postlude

What Wondrous Love is This

Please be seated in personal reflection until the postlude ends.

The Meaning of Ash Wednesday

Our Lenten journey begins 40 days before Easter (not counting Sundays) on Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. We do this in the context of worship, wrapping ourselves in prayer, the words of Scripture, and the imposition of ashes. This night marks the beginning of a season where many engage in additional spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, or almsgiving.

But Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one's faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities that we are finite beings. They symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die as we hear the somber reminder: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The sign of the cross also proclaims that we belong to God through the love of Jesus Christ, even in the midst of our imperfections.

Ash Wednesday reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. New life requires a daily surrendering of the old life, letting go of the present order, so that we may embrace the new humanity God intends for us. It is the power of the resurrection on the horizon ahead that draws us in repentance toward the cross and tomb. Through the intervention of God's gracious resurrection, lifelong changes in our values and behavior become possible. By turning from the end of the "old self" in us, Lenten repentance makes it possible for us to affirm joyfully, "Death is no more!". That journey begins tonight, with a reminder of

the one who loves us and claims us in life and in death, and our desire, inwardly and outwardly, to follow him.



Serving in Worship Today:

Choirmasters: Mary Ann & Larry Casey

Pianist: Mary Ann Casey

Ushers: Mike Gibson, Patricia Langfitt

Elevator Assistant: Steve Spratt

Sanctuary Guild: Connie Barnes

Videographers: Jerry Zekert

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