



COMMUNITY
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



February 17, 2021

Call to Worship: We have stepped aside from the tasks of this day
and will pause now to observe Ash Wednesday together.

This is a time of reflection and stillness.

Let us open our hearts and minds to God's presence.

***Hymn: "What Wondrous Love is This?" 257**

Verse 1: What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul for my soul!
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

Verse 2: When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down, when I was sinking down sinking down;
when I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown, Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul!

Verse 3: To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing, to God and to the Lamb I will sing!
To God and to the Lamb who is the Great "I Am," while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing!
While millions join the theme, I will sing!

Verse 4: And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on, and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on!
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be, and through eternity, I'll sing on I'll sing on,
And thro' eternity I'll sing on!

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Scripture: Matthew 6: 1-6, The Message Interpretation, by Eugene Peterson

The World Is Not a Stage

6 "Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it.
It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding.

2-4 "When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action,
I'm sure—"playactors" I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting
compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all
they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively.
That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

Pray with Simplicity

5 "And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people
making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for fifteen minutes of fame!
Do you think God sits in a box seat?

6 "Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play
before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God,
and you will begin to sense his grace.

Message: "Marked"

Who are we who have come here today? We are God's people who have come to be reminded of our
immortality, anticipating being marked by ashes! How do you feel when you hear these words: "Remember,
you are dust, and unto dust, you shall return." Anxious! shocked? Is anyone joyful? We have come to this
time freely entering into the season of Lent. We have come knowing that we are being joined by Christians

all around the world who are also committed *to being the church*. We have come in hope...knowing that by the end of these 40 days, it will be beginning to look like spring. The earth will be changing. Perhaps, we too, will have experienced a change.

In just a few minutes, as we trace the mark of the cross on our foreheads or on our hands...recall, if you will that a cross was traced with water, on your head the day you were baptized. And long after that water and these ashes have been washed away...that cross will remain in place.

This season of Lent is a reminder to us as Christ's disciples, that we have been marked by his cross.... no matter where we are or how we observe these days of Lent.

Today's scripture tells us ... "When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out... And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either.'

We need not brag that we have given up the internet or chocolates or cigarettes "for Lent." We need not tell of great things we have done to help the poor or to feed the hungry. What we need to do is to more faithfully commit to being who we say we are; to never forget that we are marked with the cross of Jesus; and to continually give thanks for his great love for us! Quietly. In secret places.

Let these days of our Lenten journey be a time when we open our hearts to some retreating from the normal, some quiet time of prayer, some time to seek out some good that we can do. We had already been "marked" when we joined in this time *of pause*...let the re-marking of the cross help you to never forget... whose you are.

Marking with Ashes: We remember now that we are God's beloved dust and to God's beloved dust we shall return. As we trace a cross symbolically now, or print it with ashes on our foreheads or on our hands, we begin our Lenten journey together.

Let us pray: We lift our voices to and our imaginations and the meditations of our hearts to you, O God. We praise you even when we shout for you to show up in places of devastation and in our hours of grief.

We boldly ask for your presence when we know that you are already here and have been here all of the time! We are frustrated with the limits of this ashy flesh & fleeting life, offering you our thanks and praise for your grace, which surrounds us like a most beautifully crafted blanket, the warmest hug of a friend!

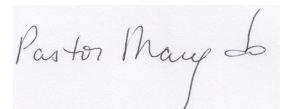
We lift our prayers for family and friends who are grieving and remembering their loved ones. We lift to you those who are hurting and healing; those who are depressed and anxious during these cold and still dark days of winter. We thank you for this time in our journey of faith...for this season of Lent which restores our faith in the promise of the Resurrection. Hear now those joys and concerns that we hold in our hearts.

Let us pray together the words that Jesus taught us: **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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but, deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

***Benediction: Now is the acceptable time. Now is the time of salvation.**

With God's help, we will let our light shine in the shadow of the cross during these Forty Days.

The blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Comforter is always with us!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Mary L." The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored rectangular background.