

Ash Wednesday – February 17, 2021

Litany

L: In the very beginning of all things, God shone God's great light of creation.

P: Help us, God. Come find us in our darkness!

L: In the earliest of times, when people turned their backs on God, God's light shone through the prophets.

P: Help us, God. Come, find us in our darkness!

L: In the fullness of time, God's light shone through the Son to lead us back to God.

P: Help us, God. Come, find us in our darkness!

L: When the followers of the Way huddled in a darkened room, fearful of others. God's light of resurrection shown through in the message brought by Mary to the disciples.

P: Help us, God. Come, find us in our darkness!

L: When the witnesses to Christ gathered in a darkened space, the God's light burst forth as though it was tongues of fire, resting upon each person.

P: Help us, God. Come, find us in our darkness!

L: In these dark times, as in all times past, God's light continues to shine, lighting our path, comforting our spirits, inspiring our souls.

P: Lord God, help us reach out to you and receive your light. Be with us as we journey through our darkness toward the light of joy that is to come. AMEN.

Let us pray . . .

A Reading From Psalm 51

Psalm 51:1 <To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.> 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.

THE EPISTLE READING: II Corinthians 5:20-6:2

A reading from the Second letter of Paul to the Corinthians...

(NRSV) 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 he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. {22} For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

This is the word of the Lord.

P Thanks be to God.

THE GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew....

(NRSV) "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. {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. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as 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.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

P Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

THE OLD TESTAMENT READING: Joel 2:12-18 -

A Reading from the book of the Prophet Joel....

(NRSV) 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, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. {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; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; {16} gather the people. Sanctify 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?'" {18} Then the LORD became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.

Meditation

May God enrich your Lenten journey.

First & Grand Ave United Methodist Churches

Porterville, CA

Rev. Tom Buratovich

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www.grandavenue.org

*We welcome you to join us Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
in the Courtyard of First UMC Porterville.*