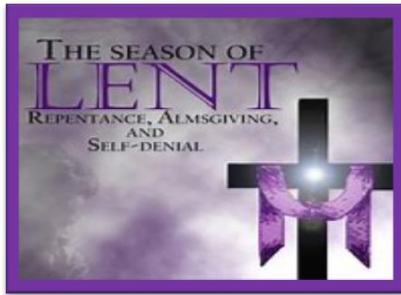


Saint John AME Church, Downtown Birmingham

Season of Lent



ASH WEDNESDAY *Worship*

March 2, 2022 – 6:30PM

The Reverend Dr. Ronald D. Sterling, Pastor

The Reverend Dwight E. Dillard, Sr., Presiding Elder
The Right Reverend Harry L. Seawright, Presiding Prelate
The Reverend Sherita M. Seawright, Episcopal Supervisor

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THE LENTEN SEASON

The early Christians observed the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection with great devotion, and it became the custom of the church to observe 40 days of spiritual preparation leading up to Easter. This was a time when people who have been separated from the community of faith because of their sins were reconciled through penitence and forgiveness and restored through the life of the church.

In this way, the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we ought to know the need of renewing our Christian faith. I invite you then, in the name of Jesus Christ, to observe a Holy Lent through the spiritual disciplines of, self-examination, prayer, fasting, self-denial, and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Scripture.

Scott Waalkes writes in *The Fullness of Time in a Flat World* that “Observing Lent can help us enter the fullness of God. In the broadest sense, Lent re-enacts Jesus’ turn toward Jerusalem and his turn toward the suffering that culminates on the cross. It is a season of preparation for Holy Week and Easter, and in the early church, it was a time to prepare catechumens [convert to Christianity] before their baptism on Easter.”¹

ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Putting ashes on our heads as a form of penitence is a practice inherited from Jewish tradition. Ashes, for Jews and Christians alike, are a sign of repentance, sorrow, and mourning. The King of Nineveh believed the prophecy of Jonah and fasted forty days wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes to save the city, and ordered the people to do so, too (Jonah 3:4-10). Jeremiah calls Israel to “wallow in ashes” of repentance (Jeremiah 6:26). Abraham speaks of being unworthy to speak with God because he is “but dust and ashes” (Genesis 2:7). Jesus also refers to this symbol in Matthew 11:21.

We cannot appreciate God’s infinite mercy if we do not realize we need mercy. We cannot understand salvation apart from our recognition of our need to be saved, rescued, from our sin, which otherwise separates us forever from God. Ashes remind us of this need. When we wear the ashes on our heads, we also acknowledge the sacrifice of Christ, who forever substituted His own death for the “burnt offerings” made by Old Testament priests to atone for the sins of the people.

The ashes imposed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday are a reminder of our unworthiness and sinfulness—sinfulness that corrupts and stains us and leads to death (we return to the dust from when we came.) Ashes remind us of our original sin and our need of redemption—our need to be cleansed of sin and made worthy of Salvation.

¹Scott Waalkes, *The Fullness of Time in a Flat World: Globalization and the Liturgical Year* (2010)

Order of Worship

The Choral Call to Worship

“We Have Come Into This House”

By Bruce Ballinger

We have come into His house And gathered in His name to worship Him, We have come into His house And gathered in His name to worship Him, We have come into His house And gathered in His name to worship Him Worship Him, Christ, the Lord.

So, forget about yourself And concentrate on Him and worship Him So, forget about yourself And concentrate on Him and worship Him So, forget about yourself And concentrate on Him and worship Him Worship Him, Christ, the Lord.

Let us lift up holy hands And magnify His Name and worship Him Let us lift up holy hands And magnify His Name and worship Him Let us lift up holy hands And magnify His Name and worship Him Worship Him, Christ, the Lord.

The Silent Meditation

If you have sinned, do not lose hope because of your error. Pray instead.

On the other hand, if you have done something good, never presume too much on account of your goodness. Never congratulate yourself excessively.

Never look down on someone else for sinning, and remember that when the wayward soul prays and repents of doing wrong, the Lord will raise that person up, as he did Lazarus.

Aelfric of Eynsham (c.955 – c. 1010)

The Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Call to Worship

Minister: O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.

People: To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Minister: Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

People: Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

ALL: I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
Praise ye the Lord!

The Hymn.....“Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior”

*Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.*

*Refrain: Savior, Savior, Hear my humble cry,
While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.*

*Let me at Thy throne of mercy; Find a sweet relief;
Kneeling there in deep contrition, Help my unbelief.*

*Trusting only in Thy merit, Would I seek Thy face;
Heal my wounded, broken spirit, Save me by Thy grace.*

*Thou the spring of all my comfort, More than life to me,
Whom have I on earth beside Thee, Whom in Heav'n but Thee.*

The Corporate Prayer of Confession (Unison)

Lord, we confess our sins before you. We confess that we have fallen short of your glory and your intent for our lives. Open our eyes that we may see ourselves with clarity and truthfulness, that we may have eyes to see all of that within us that is not pleasing to you.

The PrayerRev. Xavier Beasley

The Prayer Response.....“Praise Him”

*Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!
Jesus, blessed savior, He's worthy to be praised.*

*From the rising of the sun, Until the going down of the same.
He's worthy, Jesus is worthy, He's worthy to be praised.*

The Scripture Readings (English Standard Version)

Old Testament.....Rev. Laurel J. Thornton

Psalm 3

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, “There is no salvation for him in God.” But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!

New Testament.....Brother Freddie Robinson
2 Corinthians 7:9-11

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point, you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

Gospel.....Rev. Charles Marie Davis
Matthew 5:43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The Decalogue (Summary)

Hear what Christ our Savior saith, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

The Imposition of Ashes

(Instrumentalists are to play softly)

And the minister shall say, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return.”

The Blessing of the Offertory (*Offering to be given after the benediction*)

The Worship through Music

The Message.....Rev. Dr. Thomas Beavers
Pastor, New Rising Star

The Invitation to Christian Discipleship

The Passing of the Peace

Leader: Since we are reconciled to God and accepted into his household, we have his peace as brothers and sisters in Christ. Offer the Peace of Christ to one another as brothers and sisters.

The peace of Christ be with you all.

People: And also with you.

The Benediction.....Rev. Dr. Thomas Beavers



CONTINUED READING FOR THIS WEEK AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

March 3, 2022: Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

Luke 9:18–25

Psalm 1

March 4, 2022: Friday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1–9a

Matthew 9:10–17

Psalm 51:1–10

March 5, 2022: Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:9b–14

Luke 5:27–32

Psalm 86:1–11

March 6, 2022: First Sunday in Lent

Deuteronomy 26:1–11

Romans 10:8b–13

Luke 4:1–13

Psalm 91:1–2, 9–16

