



Title: Prayer. Date: 2014. Artist: Mike Moyers.

Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026, 6:30 pm



St. John's Lutheran Church

Salisbury, North Carolina



*The congregation is invited to respond where words are in **Bold**.
Hymns are found by number in the red worship books located in each pew.*

*We gather in silence for reflection and examination.
The tolling of the bell represents the beginning of the 40-day journey of Lent.*

PSALM 51:1-17

sung responsively





¹¹Cast me not away | from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.

¹²**Restore to me the joy of | your salvation
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.**

¹³Let me teach your ways | to offenders,
and sinners shall be re- | stored to you.

¹⁴**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of | my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing | of your righteousness.**

¹⁵O Lord, o- | pen my lips,
and my mouth shall pro- | claim your praise.

¹⁶**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or | I would give it.
You are not pleased | with burnt offering.**

¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a | troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will | not despise.

GREETING AND PRAYER

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray: Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



READING

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

A reading from Joel, the 2nd chapter.

¹ 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.

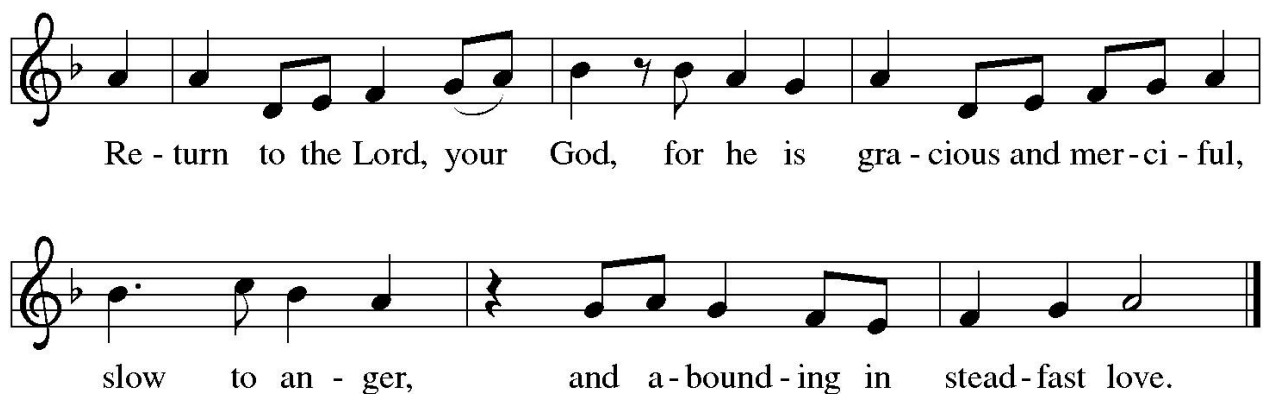
¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’ ”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

We rise.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 6th chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ “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.

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.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Be seated.

SERMON

Pastor James Demmel

We rise.

HYMN OF THE DAY

‘Restore in Us, O God’

ELW 328



1 Re - store in us, O God, the splen - dor of your love; re -
2 O Spir - it, wake in us the won - der of your pow'r; from
3 Bring us, O Christ, to share the full - ness of your joy; bap -
4 Three-per - soned God, ful - fill the prom - ise of your grace, that



new your im - age in our hearts, and all our sins re - move.
fruit-less fear un - furl our lives like spring-time bud and flow'r.
tize us in the ris - en life that death can - not de - stroy.
we, when all our search-ing ends, may see you face to face.

Be seated.

INVITATION TO LENT

Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Most holy and merciful God, **we confess to you and to one another, and before the whole company of heaven, that we have sinned by our fault, by our own fault, by our own most grievous 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. 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 shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship,
and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.
Have mercy on us, O God.

Our neglect of human need and suffering,
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.
Have mercy on us, O God.

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors,
and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.
Have mercy on us, O God.

Our waste and pollution of your creation,
and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.
Have mercy on us, O God.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

ANTHEM

‘A Willing Heart’

Tom Fettke

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Create in me a pure heart, O God.
May your Spirit and presence be near.
And restore unto me the joy of your salvation,
And uphold me with your gracious Spirit.*



We rise.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, we pray as 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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 and ever. Amen.**

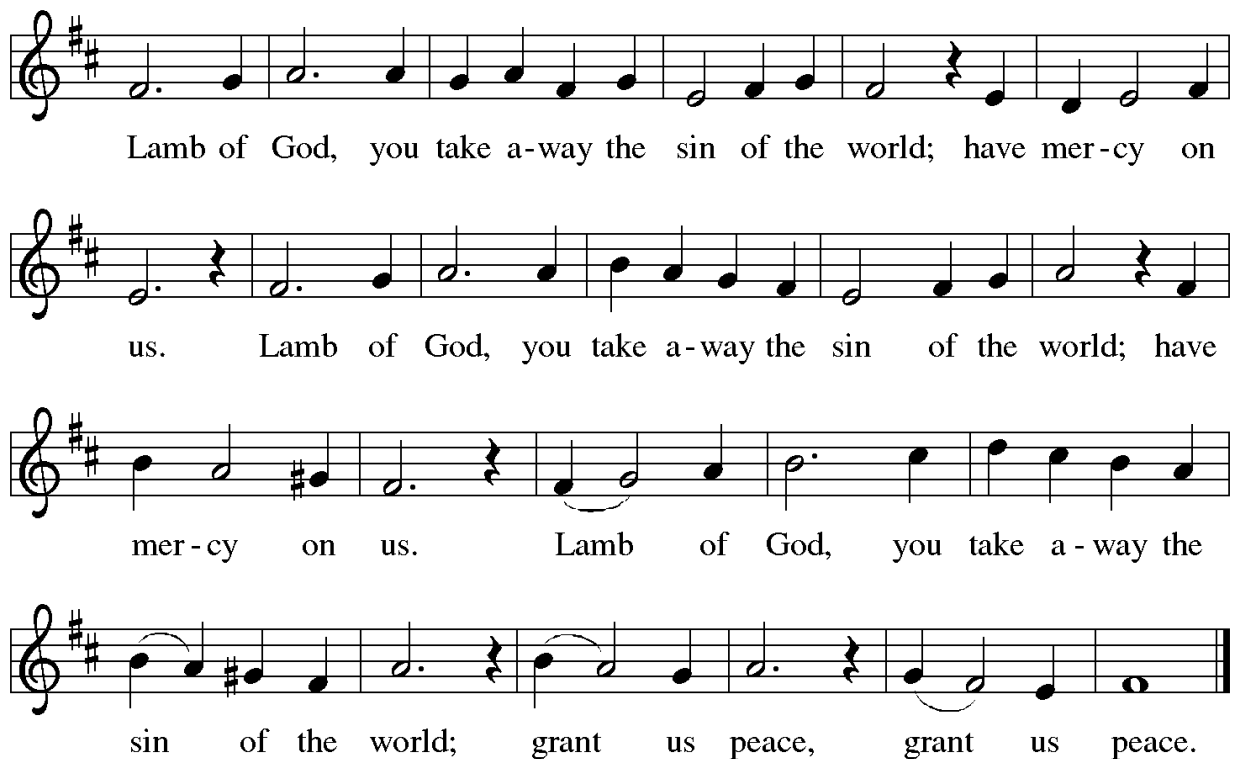
INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy. **Thanks be to God.**

Be seated.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION and the IMPOSITION OF ASHES *have been combined this evening. Please follow the ushers' guidance down the center aisle. Pastors at the head of the aisle will mark a cross of ashes on the foreheads of those desiring to receive them. If you prefer no ashes, please continue to a Communion station. After receiving ashes, proceed to the Communion station at the altar. Those not communing are invited forward for a pastoral blessing. All the baptized are welcome to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Ashes remind us of our mortality and our need for lifelong repentance and conversion. When we repent, we turn our hearts again toward Christ rejoicing that, though sinful, we have been promised a new beginning with Christ.*

COMMUNION HYMN



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION SONG

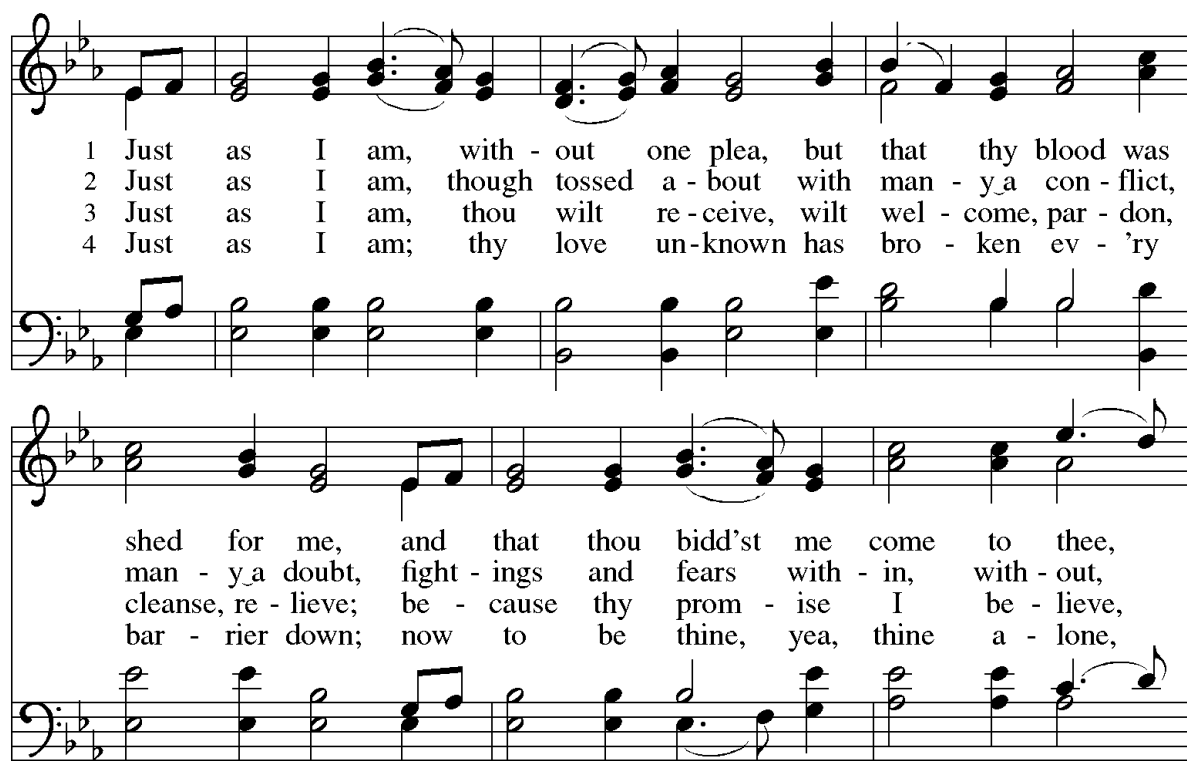
'I Want Jesus to Walk with Me'
Mark Hayes

Janie Rollins

COMMUNION HYMN

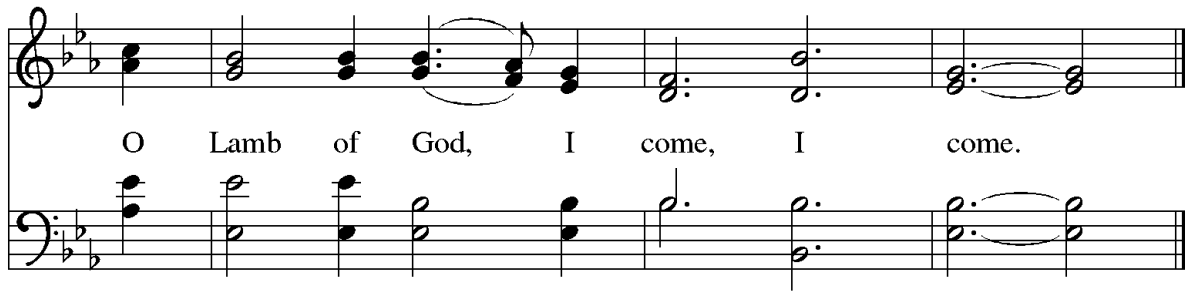
'Just As I Am'

ELW 592



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y a con - flict,
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,
4 Just as I am; thy love un-known has bro - ken ev - 'ry

shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
man - y a doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,



We rise.

COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen.**

Let us pray: God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING *Forgiven and nourished, we are now sent into the world to share God's love.*



BLESSING

During this 40-day journey of Lent, may God restore in you the joy of salvation, may God strengthen you in love for your neighbor, may God grant you to live in harmony with all of creation. God the giver of love, ✠ Christ, the resurrection and the life, and the Holy Spirit of rebirth bless you in this Lenten journey. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL AND POSTLUDE

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.**

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Preacher.....Pastor James Demmel
Presider.....Pastor Dan Joyner Miller

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Pastoral Ministry

Senior Pastor.....Dan Joyner Miller...ext. 2060
Pastor for Congregational CareLori Carter...ext. 2050
Pastor for Youth and OutreachJames Demmel...ext. 2040

Worship and Music Ministry

Pastor for Worship and the Arts.....Spence Robertson...ext. 2080
Production Manager.....Taylor Hutchins...ext. 2190
Associate Parish Musician.....Janie Rollins
Contemporary Worship Leaders.....Michael Board and Ondria Witt
Director of Music *emeritus*.....Karl Kinard, Jr., *deacon*

Program Ministry

Children.....Stacey Shafer...ext. 2020
St. John's Kindergarten (4 & 5 year olds), Director.....Bonita Rowland...ext. 2120
Child Development Center, Executive Director.....Lea Anne Thomas...ext. 3212

Administrative Team

Church Administrator.....Deborah Cross...ext. 2030
Office Manager.....Vivian Connor...ext. 2000
Bookkeeper.....Mark Bias...ext. 2170
Communication Specialist.....Stephanie Mesimer...ext. 2220
Ministry Program Coordinator.....Mary Wymbs...ext. 2180
Facility Manager.....David Ellenburg...ext. 2070
Custodian.....Steven Elliott



Let's connect faith and life. *Together.*

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