



Friends Church

An Open & Affirming Congregation



"Ash"

Mike Moyers (2016)

February 14, 2024

7:30 am

Ash Wednesday Service & Imposition of Ashes

GATHERING AND LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

WORDS OF WELCOME

*CALL TO WORSHIP (FROM PSALM 51:10-12, 6)

One: Create in me a clean heart, O God,

All: and put a new and right spirit within me.

One: Do not cast me away from your presence,

All: and do not take your holy spirit from me.

One: Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

All: and sustain in me a willing spirit.

One: You desire truth in the inward being;

All: therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

*OPENING SONG: "PURIFY MY HEART"

Purify my heart...touch me with your cleansing fire.

Take me to the cross...Your holiness is my desire.

Breathe your life in me,

Kindle the love that flows from your throne.

Oh, purify my heart....Purify my heart.

*INVOCATION

HEBEW SCRIPTURE READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17, NRSV

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— 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.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 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. 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? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; 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. 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?’”

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, The Message

“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. 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. 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? 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.

“When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don’t make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won’t make you a saint. If you ‘go into training’ inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn’t require attention-getting devices. He won’t overlook what you are doing; he’ll reward you well. Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.”

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: **God is still speaking. Thanks be to God!**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND LIGHTING OF CANDLES FOR INTERCESSIONS

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

We repent, O God. We repent of our worldliness.

We repent of the systems and structures humanity has created that exploit others to create wealth for a very few.

We repent of the worldly measures of success that pit us against each other.

We repent of white supremacy that has manifested in our lives as privilege for those with lighter skin and oppression for those with darker skin.

We repent of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and all the ways we despise, hate, and reject our siblings in You.

We repent of genocide and colonization.

We repent of the mechanisms of wealth that create poverty, hunger, and homelessness.

We repent of our fears that stigmatize those with mental illness.

We repent of ableism.

We repent of our sin, our complicity in the systems around us.

We repent to our very bones, made of the stardust You created the universe with.

Wash our hearts, O God. Make us clean. Turn us back to You.

Transform our hearts to love with the love You have for us, O God.

In the name of Jesus, who bore the cross for us and calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow him, we pray these things. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

PRAYER FOR THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

INVITATION TO THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*BENEDICTION

*PASSING OF THE PEACE