



Ash Wednesday
Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church
February 22nd, 2023

Seeking: Is this the fast that I choose?

Is this the fast that I choose? As we begin our series, we must examine if our actions match what we profess. As we practice seeking this Lent, what kind of fast will you choose? How will you live your faith? How will you live the questions of your faith? In our spiritual practices, will we seek to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)

Call to Worship

We gather together at the edge of a new season.

We stand together on the cusp of something new.

Will we wade into self-reflection?

Will we invite honesty to dance?

Will we listen for God's invitation?

Will we seek deeper faith?

What kind of fast do we choose? What kind of faith will we build?

We gather together at the edge of a new season.

Listen, God is speaking.

Call to Confession

Our scripture passage for today tells the story of people who are trying hard to be faithful. They ask God, "God, do you notice? Do you see all the good we're doing? Are you proud of us?" It sounds a bit like children seeking parental attention. Did we do a good job? In those moments we always want to hear God say, "Excellent job, good and faithful servant." But in today's scripture, God says to the people, "I want you to seek justice." Friends, faith is a constant dance of us asking God, "Am I doing it right?" and, "How can I do better?" In the prayer of confession we linger in this tension for a moment. We acknowledge that we are works in progress and we ask for God's help. God may challenge us, but fortunately, God will never abandon us. So let us turn to God in prayer, Let us pray:

Prayer of Confession (*Brief Silence*)

Merciful God, How many times in a day could we choose love?

How many times could we choose justice?

How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

How many times could we offer grace?

How many times, God? And how often do we miss it?

Forgive us for choosing the path you did not travel.

Forgive us for hitching our horse to the world's measure of goodness, instead of yours.

Return our hearts to you, and guide us continually, even in the parched places.

With gratitude we pray, **amen.**

Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith, when a baby is learning to walk, the parents do not criticize the baby for falling. Instead, they celebrate every wobbly step. They applaud every hesitant stand. They whoop and holler when their child lands in their arms. Surely the same must be true of God. Although we often lose our way and we often choose the wrong thing, I imagine God whoops and hollers with every step in God's direction. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: no matter how many times we fall, no matter how many times we choose the wrong path, God is waiting for us at the end with open arms. We are forgiven. We are invited. We belong. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

Gathering Hymn

O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days (Verse 1)

ELW #319

Prayer for Illumination

God, We want to hear your voice.

Shout loudly; don't hold back. Move in our spirits the way you moved over the waters of creation.

We are beginning a new season today, God, and we don't want to begin anything without you.

So speak to us today—through silence, through scripture, through song. Speak to us as you

spoke to the Israelites so many moons ago. Speak to us like a gentle breeze or a loud trumpet.

We don't care how, we just long to hear your voice.

So don't hold back. We are here. We are listening. Amen.

Word

Isaiah 58:1-12

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. ²Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. ³"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. ⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. ⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. ¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Message

Hymn of The Day

O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days (Verse 2&3)

ELW #319

Imposition of Ashes

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a God who chooses freedom, who unties every rope and carries our burdens. We believe in a God who ushers in the poor and the hungry, who has a seat saved for all of us. We believe in a God whose love is like the sun, who says, "I'm here, I'm here!" every time we cry. We believe in a God who walks before us in the parched places, who rescues our bones, who tends to us like a gardener. And because we believe, we strive to choose love. Because we believe, we strive to pursue justice. Because we believe...Amen.

Prayers of Intercession Response: **Receive our prayer.**

Offering

Offering Song

Give Thanks

Gray #170

Offering Prayer

God of good gifts, receive these and all our offerings as we present them in faithful service for the sake of your gospel. Prepare our hearts to receive you in this meal as you pour out your very presence through Christ Jesus, the wellspring of eternal life. Amen.

Holy Communion

Invitation to the Table

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lift Up Your Hearts

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right to give God thanks and Praise.

God of the lost and found.....

***Words of Institution**

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***Lord's Prayer**

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Communion Distribution (All Are Welcome to Receive Communion Here at GA Church)

Post Communion Blessing

Post Communion Prayer

God of manna and mustard seeds, we came to this Table hungry and we leave feeling full—full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be. For we not only found glimpses of you at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be: in a meal where all are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? So thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction. May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts we pray, **Amen.**

Sending

Benediction

As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking. Seek out the hungry. Seek the weary. Seek the good in every person you pass. Seek out the hopeful. Seek the faithful. Seek God in each of us. As you seek and as you wonder, may you find what you are looking for. In the name of our loving God, who is always seeking us, go now in peace. Amen.

Sending Hymn

O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days (Verse 4)

ELW #319

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve in Love.

C: To share the Good News of God's Word and to serve the community and the world.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Bulletin Donated:

Mission Statement of Gustaf Lutheran Church (Adopted in 2022)

To share the Good News of God's Word and to serve the community and the world.

Matthew 22:39 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

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We celebrate weekly Holy Communion. We welcome all who believe in the Risen Christ and who find in the sacrament our Lord's real presence for the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. If you receive communion in your home congregation, you are invited to receive it here at G.A. Red wine and white grape juice will be offered to you in Christ's name. You may choose your preference. If you are unable to receive wheat bread, or wine, be sure that in a single element you receive the Presence and all the gifts of the sacrament.

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