

Prelude

There is a Balm in Gilead #553

Gathering Adapted from: The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America by Mark Lewis Taylor.

“The notion of the executed God, if seriously embraced, means the loss of certain long-standing modes of belief in God. Some of our dearest gods die, we might say, when we allow ourselves to meditate on the executed God.

“To be sure, the gods looked for apart from world struggle, apart from concrete suffering, these die. The gods that keep us talking about small problems, about worlds of clean churches and safe spaces, these are put to death. When we turn to Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and work was defined by participation in material conditions that led to torture and death, then we have to let go of other kinds of gods whose allure is still strong in some quarters today.”

God sent Jesus into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him.¹

God’s love endures and strengthens us forever.

God is our refuge and our strength, a present help in times of trouble, therefore we shall not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with tumult.²

God’s love endures and strengthens us now.

A Moment of Reflection

¹ John 3:17; ² Psalm 46: 1-3

We Pray Together.... Psalm 51 Miserere mei, Deus (Variation)

Have mercy on us, God, according to your loving-kindness.

In your great compassion, erase any of our offenses.

Cleanse our shortcomings through and through
and eliminate all that separates us from you.

For at times, we have been found ourselves a distance from you,
and we seek to be closer, always.

Take away our shortcomings and all that interferes in our nearness to you.
Help us to hear you more clearly.

Fill us with joy and gladness in all the ways we know and find you.
Mend what was once broken with wholeness.

Create in us a transformed heart and a transfigured presence.
Renew a right spirit in us, open our hearts to all. Amen.

The Rite of Reconciliation: Imposition of Ashes

As Jesus carried the separation of this world from God to the cross where the distance was closed forever, we are called to find ways to reduce that same separation in our lives. We know this is a lifelong journey and approach our calls to wholeness, pardon and forgiveness with humility, knowing how powerless we are without turning our lives and our will over to God, asking for help.

*As we share the ashes with one another, please do so with these words:
May these ashes remind you of the God in your life, who loves you.*

Reading & Prayer Matthew 6:9-21; 5-15

“And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production. 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 God’s grace.

This is your Creator who knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Creator in heaven, reveal who you are.

Set the world right; Do what’s best—as above, so below.

Keep us alive with three square meals.

Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.

Keep us safe from ourselves and the Transgressor.

You’re in charge! You can do anything you want!

You’re ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.

“In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part.

And remember, “Don’t hoard your treasure *down here* where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or stolen away. Stockpile treasure with God, 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.”

Departing in chant and silence...

♩ = 78

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Ubi caritas

U-bi ca-ri-tas et a - mor, u-bi ca-ri-tas De-us i - bi est.



Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2017

Dear People of God, a God of Many Names and Mysterious Ways,

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of Jesus’ passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the early Church to prepare for this remembrance through community, prayer, and fasting. In the early Church, this season of Lent provided a time in which converts were prepared for Holy Baptism. Historically, it was also a time when those who had become separated from the community of followers were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the family of those following the teachings of Jesus. It was the way then, as it is now, to remember the message of pardon and absolution that our service will symbolize this evening. It is a reminder to come together in forgiveness and pardon, to reduce the distance between one another by reducing the distance between ourselves and the God who loves us.

Let us begin this evening’s service with a moment of silence as we enter the sacred and mysterious place of God’s presence.