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February 18, 2026    †    Ash Wednesday

## “O LOVE, HOW DEEP, HOW BROAD, HOW HIGH”

This Ash Wednesday, we introduce our Lent sermon series, which is based on the ancient hymn “O Love, How Deep” (*LSB* 544). This hymn, written in the fifteenth century, contemplates the love of God in becoming man, taking on our life, dying our death, and rising again, all *for us*. But for us to understand and appreciate this love, we must first examine ourselves and our lives to see how we have failed in thought, word, and deed. While we may try to get credit for our so-called good works, we all still die with nothing to show for them. But God’s love is not like our love. Our love is self-centered and fickle. God’s love is steady, deep, and beyond all understanding (Ephesians 3:14–19). This love of God will have no end.

## PREPARATION

### Ash Wednesday Address

☐ Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the Church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope.

Let us pray that our dear Father in heaven, for the sake of His beloved Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit, might richly bless this Lententide for us so that we may come to Easter with glad hearts and keep the feast in sincerity and truth.

*Silence for reflection*

## The Litany

**P** O Lord,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Christ,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Lord,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Christ,

**C** hear us.

**P** God the Father in heaven,

**C** have mercy.

**P** God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

**C** have mercy.

**P** God the Holy Spirit,

**C** have mercy.

**P** Be gracious to us.

**C** Spare us, good Lord.

**P** Be gracious to us.

**C** Help us, good Lord.

**P** By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity; by Your baptism, fasting, and temptation; by Your agony and bloody sweat; by Your cross and passion; by Your precious death and burial; by Your glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:

**C** Help us, good Lord.

**P** In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

**C** Help us, good Lord.

**P** We poor sinners implore You

**C** to hear us, O Lord.

**P** To prosper the preaching of Your Word; to bless our prayer and meditation; to strengthen and preserve us in the true faith; and to give heart to our sorrow and strength to our repentance:

**C** We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

**P** To draw all to Yourself; to bless those who are instructed in the faith; to watch over and console the poor, the sick, the distressed, the lonely, the

forsaken, the abandoned, and all who stand in need of our prayers; to give abundant blessing to all works of mercy; and to have mercy on us all:

**C** We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

**P** To turn our hearts to You; to turn the hearts of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; and graciously to hear our prayers:

**C** We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

**P** Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

**C** we implore You to hear us.

**P** Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

**C** have mercy.

**P** Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

**C** have mercy.

**P** Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

**C** grant us Your peace.

**P** O Christ,

**C** hear us.

**P** O Lord,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Christ,

**C** have mercy.

**P** O Lord,

**C** have mercy. Amen.

**P** O God, You desire not the death of sinners, but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. We implore You to have compassion on the frailty of our mortal nature, for we acknowledge that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Mercifully pardon our sins that we may obtain the promises You have laid up for those who are repentant; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*Using the right thumb, the pastor places the ashes on the forehead of each person in the sign of the cross, saying:*

**P** Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

*After receiving the ashes, each person returns to his or her place in silence.*

# CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

## 607 From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee

- 1 From depths of woe I cry to Thee,  
In trial and tribulation;  
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,  
Lord, hear my supplication.  
If Thou rememb'rest ev'ry sin,  
Who then could heaven ever win  
Or stand before Thy presence?
  
- 2 Thy love and grace alone avail  
To blot out my transgression;  
The best and holiest deeds must fail  
To break sin's dread oppression.  
Before Thee none can boasting stand,  
But all must fear Thy strict demand  
And live alone by mercy.
  
- 3 Therefore my hope is in the Lord  
And not in mine own merit;  
It rests upon His faithful Word  
To them of contrite spirit  
That He is merciful and just;  
This is my comfort and my trust.  
His help I wait with patience.
  
- 4 And though it tarry through the night  
And till the morning waken,  
My heart shall never doubt His might  
Nor count itself forsaken.  
O Israel, trust in God your Lord.  
Born of the Spirit and the Word,  
Now wait for His appearing.
  
- 5 Though great our sins, yet greater still  
Is God's abundant favor;  
His hand of mercy never will  
Abandon us, nor waver.  
Our shepherd good and true is He,  
Who will at last His Israel free  
From all their sin and sorrow.

*The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

### Invocation

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

### Exhortation

*LSB 184*

- P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
**C** **who made heaven and earth.**  
**P** I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,  
**C** **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

*Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.*

### Confession of Sins

*LSB 184*

- P** O almighty God, merciful Father,  
**C** **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

### Absolution

*LSB 185*

- P** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

## SERVICE OF THE WORD

PSALM

*Psalms 51:1–13*

- P** Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love;  
**C** according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
- P** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!  
**C** For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
**P** Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight,  
**C** so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment.
- P** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.  
**C** Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- P** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
**C** Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice.
- P** Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.  
**C** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
- P** Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.  
**C** Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- P** Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You.  
**C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Kyrie

LSB 186

### Salutation and Collect of the Day

- P** The Lord be with you.  
**C** And with thy spirit.

- P** Let us pray.  
 Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and

forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## Old Testament Reading

*Joel 2:12–19*

<sup>12</sup>“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,  
“return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup>and rend your hearts and not your garments.”  
Return to the LORD, your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;  
and he relents over disaster.  
<sup>14</sup>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?  
<sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
consecrate a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
<sup>16</sup>gather the people.  
Consecrate the congregation;  
assemble the elders;  
gather the children,  
even nursing infants.  
Let the bridegroom leave his room,  
and the bride her chamber.  
<sup>17</sup>Between the vestibule and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep  
and say, “Spare your people, O LORD,  
and make not your heritage a reproach,  
a byword among the nations.  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
‘Where is their God?’”  
<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD became jealous for his land  
and had pity on his people.  
<sup>19</sup>The LORD answered and said to his people,  
“Behold, I am sending to you  
grain, wine, and oil,  
and you will be satisfied;  
and I will no more make you  
a reproach among the nations.”

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Epistle

*2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10*

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>1</sup>Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says,

“In a favorable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. <sup>3</sup>We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup>by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; <sup>7</sup>by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup>through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Holy Gospel

*Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter.

**C** Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

<sup>1</sup>[Jesus said:] “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you

give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,<sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>But when 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. . . .

<sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

### Nicene Creed

**C** I believe in one God,  
the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth  
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only-begotten Son of God,  
begotten of His Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light,  
very God of very God,  
begotten, not made,  
being of one substance with the Father,  
by whom all things were made;  
who for us men and for our salvation came down from  
heaven  
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary  
and was made man;  
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

**He suffered and was buried.  
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures  
and ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of the Father.  
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living  
and the dead,  
whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord and giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and  
glorified,  
who spoke by the prophets.  
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,  
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,  
and I look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

#### **544 O Love, How Deep**

- 1 O love, how deep, how broad, how high,  
Beyond all thought and fantasy,  
That God, the Son of God, should take  
Our mortal form for mortals' sake!
  
- 5 For us by wickedness betrayed,  
For us, in crown of thorns arrayed,  
He bore the shameful cross and death;  
For us He gave His dying breath.
  
- 6 For us He rose from death again;  
For us He went on high to reign;  
For us He sent His Spirit here  
To guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

Text: attr. Thomas à Kempis, 1380–1471; tr. Benjamin Webb, 1819–85, alt.  
Text: Public domain

## **Sermon**

### **Offertory**

*LSB 192*

- ☒ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit  
within me.  
Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy**

**Spirit from me.**

**Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.**

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

**P** Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

For all who do not know our loving Lord, that He would bring the news of Christ to their ears, strengthen them in faith, and urge them to live in love, let us pray to the Lord.

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For the church, that God would open doors of opportunity for leaders and members to proclaim the Gospel, that schisms within it be mended, that the faithful be protected in body and soul, and that all people of faith find joy in their ministry, let us pray to the Lord.

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** Where there is conflict and warfare between nations, that God would move leaders and citizens to seek peace with their neighbors and calm within their borders, let us pray to the Lord.

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** Where the old and young are forgotten, the sick and grieving ignored, and the needs of any are not met, that God would prosper the work of our hands to provide for their needs, let us pray to the Lord.

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For each of us, that our service to God, our concern for one another, and the mission He puts before us be joyful endeavors we seek for the growth of the church and glory of God, let us pray to the Lord.

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C Amen.**

# SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

LSB 194

## Preface

LSB 194

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** **And with thy spirit.**

**P** Lift up your hearts.

**C** **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

**P** Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.

**C** **It is meet and right so to do.**

## Proper Preface

**P** It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who overcame the assaults of the devil and gave His life as a ransom for many that with cleansed hearts we might be prepared joyfully to celebrate the paschal feast in sincerity and truth. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

## Sanctus

LSB 195

**C** **Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth;  
heav'n and earth are full of Thy glory.  
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He that cometh in the  
name of the Lord.  
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

## Lord's Prayer

LSB 162

**P** Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**C** **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.**

**The Words of Our Lord**

*LSB 197*

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My  $\text{✠}$  body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My  $\text{✠}$  blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

**Pax Domini**

*LSB 197*

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C** Amen.

**Agnus Dei**

*LSB 198*

**C** **O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.**  
**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.**  
**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. Amen.**

Distribution Hymns:

**618 I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table**

1 I come, O Savior, to Thy table,  
For weak and weary is my soul;  
Thou, Bread of Life, alone art able  
To satisfy and make me whole: Refrain

ref Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood  
Be for my soul the highest good!

2 Thy heart is filled with fervent yearning  
That sinners may salvation see  
Who, Lord, to Thee in faith are turning;  
So I, a sinner, come to Thee. Refrain

3 Unworthy though I am, O Savior,  
Because I have a sinful heart,  
Yet Thou Thy lamb wilt banish never,  
For Thou my faithful shepherd art: Refrain

4 Weary am I and heavy laden;  
With sin my soul is sore oppressed;  
Receive me graciously and gladden  
My heart, for I am now Thy guest. Refrain

5 What higher gift can we inherit?  
It is faith's bond and solid base;  
It is the strength of heart and spirit,  
The covenant of hope and grace. Refrain

Text: Friedrich Christian Heyder, 1677–1754; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, abr.  
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## 706 Love in Christ Is Strong and Living

1 Love in Christ is strong and living,  
Binding faithful hearts in one;  
Love in Christ is true and giving.  
May His will in us be done.

2 Love is patient and forbearing,  
Clothed in Christ's humility,  
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring,  
Reaching out in charity.

3 Love in Christ abides forever,  
Fainting not when ills attend;  
Love, forgiving and forgiven,  
Shall endure until life's end.

Text: Dorothy R. Schultz, 1934  
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## The Dismissal

*LSB 199*

- P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart ☩ in peace.  
**C** Amen.

## Nunc Dimittis

*LSB 199*

- C** Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,

**for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel. 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.**

**Thanksgiving**

*LSB 200*

- A** O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,  
**C** and His mercy endureth forever.

**Post-Communion Collect**

- A** Let us pray.  
We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**C** Amen.

**Salutation**

*LSB 201*

- P** The Lord be with you.  
**C** And with thy spirit.

**Benedicamus**

*LSB 202*

- A** Bless we the Lord.  
**C** Thanks be to God.

**Benediction**

*LSB 202*

- P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.  
**C** Amen, amen, amen.

**418 O Lord, throughout These Forty Days**

- 1 O Lord, throughout these forty days  
You prayed and kept the fast;  
Inspire repentance for our sin,  
And free us from our past.
- 2 You strove with Satan, and You won;  
Your faithfulness endured;

Lend us Your nerve, Your skill and trust  
In God's eternal Word.

3 Though parched and hungry, yet You prayed  
And fixed Your mind above;  
So teach us to deny ourselves,  
Since we have known God's love.

4 Be with us through this season, Lord,  
And all our earthly days,  
That when the final Easter dawns,  
We join in heaven's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838–98; para. Gilbert E. Doan, 1930–2024

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