



DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
ASH WEDNESDAY — YEAR B

INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father
and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 51a

**A: Be merciful, O Lord,
for we have sinned.**

L: Have mercy on me, O God,

G: according to your unfailing love.

L: Wash away all my iniquity,

G: and cleanse me from my sin.

L: For I know my transgressions,

G: and my sin is always before me.

L: Against you, you only, have I sinned

G: and done what is evil in your sight.

L: Surely I was sinful at birth,

**G: sinful from the time my mother conceived
me.**

L: Hide your face from my sins,

G: and blot out all my iniquity.

L: Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

**G: and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain
me.**

**A: Be merciful, O Lord,
for we have sinned.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Almighty and merciful God, you never despise what you have made and always forgive those who turn to you. Create in us such new and contrite hearts that we may truly repent of our sins and obtain your full and gracious pardon; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION *see next page*

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

**A: 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.**

VERSE OF THE DAY

**A: Return to the Lord, your God, for he is
gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and
abounding in steadfast love.
(Joel 2:13 cf. RSV)**

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

A: Amen

READING AND MEDITATION:

Ash Wednesday: There are two kinds of sinners. Which one are you?

As you study this week, seek to find the connecting theme in all the lessons by using Luther's Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. *What is God saying to me in this lesson?*
2. *For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?*
3. *What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?*
4. *For what does this lesson lead me to pray?*

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 18:9-14

There are really only two people in church on Ash Wednesday. One is quite comfortable and pleased with himself. The Pharisee is indeed a fine fellow. Would that we had more people in the church and in the world who lived as he lived. He has made good use of God's blessings. And as far as he is concerned, that proves that he deserved them. So there is no anguish over sin, no recognition of the despair which should always be ours when we look at ourselves. There is sense of his desperate need for grace and pardon that covers everything that we are and have and do—especially our good works, when we imagine that they prove our worthiness. Only confessing sinners are open to that point. The publican was really being honest; he was indeed a wretch, deserving of nothing. He was by definition and occupation: *sinner*. That's who Lent is for, *sinners*. If you don't come to Lent as a sinner, you will miss its whole point and go down to your house with the Pharisee, worse off than you were when you came.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 59:12-20

Lent calls us to be truthful, to be honest with God, to take off the mask of outward decency and get to the bottom of who and what we are. When we do that on the basis of God's law, especially the First Commandment, we will see that our thoughts and our hearts and our desires are self-serving and therefore evil and corrupt through and through. Should God look for someone to save the world, he will not look to you, and not to me either. He will have to do it himself! He will have to do it alone! He will have to do it with a zeal that stops at nothing, stops not even at our wretched and total unworthiness. And in Lent he does it. He does it for sinners. Those who recognize that fact will find in Lent the Redeemer.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B—6:2

Look on in wonder and in awe! These are the most holy days of the year, the only really important days in the history of the world, in your history. For what you are, God in Christ becomes! What he is you become! Nothing else matters in time or eternity. Therefore, Lent is serious in its urging and pleading from the heart of God and from the altar of sacrifice, the cross. Do not receive the grace of God in vain! It is meant for sinners, therefore just for you! It is meant for today, therefore just for you!

My takeaways:

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON:
2 SAMUEL 12:1-13**

One of the devil's favorite temptations for us in Lent is the temptation to make comparisons that leave us looking less needy, less desperate, less deserving of God's wrath and punishment. Then the confession of sins in private prayers and in the liturgy becomes mere rote, mere empty ritual. Of all the points that can be made in this lesson, the one that sticks out on Ash Wednesday is the ease with which David condemned his own sins in someone else. Lent is not the time for looking from side to side to find others guilty of our sins whom we condemn in order to throw off anyone's suspicion of us. Lent is not the time to look from side to side at all! It is the time to come silently and alone to look down deep inside, and then to despair. It is the time to come silently and alone to look up at the cross and see there and there alone my salvation. It is time to confess with David, "I have sinned against the LORD!" The punishment for that sin Christ will bear in Lent. Chastisement we can expect to bear, the chief but not the only purpose of which will be to bring us to the cross of Christ to find there alone our salvation.

My takeaways:

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:
ACTS 5:1-11**

Among the great lessons that we should learn in Lent is this one: God wants us to be honest with him and with ourselves when we come into his presence. The two men in the gospel lesson are typical of those who are dishonest and honest in the presence of God. This reading makes it very clear that God is in deadly earnest in his call to repentance and honesty in his presence. Ananias and Sapphira used religion like the Pharisee as a cloak for an unrepentant heart. Would that they had cried like the publican for mercy when their sin was uncovered! Then they would have found a still merciful Redeemer. It's worth noting that their sin as far as the world is concerned seems trivial compared to outright stealing or a host of other great crimes against the second table of the law. But their sin was not trivial to God; it was the fruit and the evidence of unbelief and idolatry. (Again we see it: The sins against the second table of the law are sins first and foremost against the First Commandment.) As we enter into this holy season, let us strip away all pretense in the presence of God, make confession from the heart, and then look intently at Jesus in Lent for his mercy and our redemption. God is serious about it; the cross certainly shows that. May we likewise be serious about it.

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?