

DARLING DOWNS PARISH OF THE AELC
TRINITY OAKLEY, ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA

22 February 2023

Bulletin for the 1st Mid-Week Lenten Service

HYMNS: 49 361 395 48 v.3

PSALM: Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your mercy! According to Your great compassion blot out my rebellious acts!

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and declare me clean from my sin!

For I acknowledge my rebellious acts, and my sin is always before me.

I have sinned against You, You only, and I have done what is evil in Your sight,
that You may be just when You speak, that You may be blameless when You judge.

Indeed, I was born in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Indeed, You desire truth in the inner parts, and in the secret being You are teaching me wisdom.

Purify me from sin with hyssop and I shall be clean! Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow!

Cause me to hear joy and gladness! Let the bones that You have crushed rejoice!

Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities!

Create in me **a clean heart**, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit inside me!

Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me!

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and support me with a willing spirit!

I shall teach Your ways to those who are rebellious, and sinners will return to You.

Psalm 51:1-13

COLLECT: 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 for ever. Amen.

SERMON: Genesis 3:19 Significant Problem – Last Day in the Garden

“You will eat bread in the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground. For you were taken from it. For you are dust and you will return to dust.”

1st Reading: Joel 2:12-19

¹² “Nevertheless, even now,” declares the LORD, “return to Me with all your hearts, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning! ¹³ Tear your hearts and not your clothes!”

Return to the LORD, your God! For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in mercy and relents from sending calamity. ¹⁴ Who knows whether He may turn back, relent and leave a blessing behind Him, a grain-offering and a drink-offering for the LORD, your God? ¹⁵ Blow a trumpet in Zion! Announce a holy fast! Call an assembly! ¹⁶ Gather the people! Consecrate the congregation! Assemble the aged people! Gather the children, even the breast-fed infants! Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom, and let the bride leave her bridal chamber! ¹⁷ Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the Temple-porch and the altar! Let them say, “Look compassionately on Your people, O LORD! Do not make Your inheritance a disgrace and a byword among the nations! Why should people ask among the nations, ‘Where is their God?’”

¹⁸ Then the LORD became deeply devoted to His land and took pity on His people. ¹⁹ The LORD answered His people: “Look! I am sending you grain, new wine and olive-oil. They will satisfy you. I shall not make you an object of scorn among the nations any longer.”

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Drawn from the Four Gospels, Part 1

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called “the Passover,” was approaching. Jesus told His disciples, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the chief priest, whose name was Caiaphas. They plotted to arrest Jesus in an underhanded way and kill Him. However, they said, “Not during the festival! Or there may be a riot among the people.”

Then Satan entered Judas, who was called “Iscaiot,” and who was numbered among the Twelve. Judas went to the chief priests and the captains and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus to them. They were glad, and

agreed to give him money. He consented, and kept looking for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.¹

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

He sent two of His disciples and told them: “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him! Where he goes inside, tell the owner: ‘The Teacher asks, “Where is My guest-room, in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’ Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there!”

The disciples left, went into the city, and found things just as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, He and the apostles reclined at the table. He told them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I shall certainly not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”²

Then a dispute arose among them about which of them was considered to be the greatest. Jesus told them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ However, you should not be like that! Rather, the one who is the greatest among you should become like the youngest, and the one who rules should be like the one who serves! For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? However, I am among you as the One who serves. However, you are those who have continued with Me in My temptations. I also confer on you a kingdom, as My Father has conferred one on Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom; and that you may sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”³

Before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knew His hour had come to leave this world and go to the Father. He had loved His own who were in the world, and He loved them completely. The evening meal was being served, and the Devil had already put the idea of betraying Jesus into the mind of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God. Jesus rose from the meal, laid aside His outer garments, took a towel, and tied it around His

¹ Matt. 26:1-5; Mk 14:1-2; Luke 22:1-6

² Matt. 26:17-20; Mk 14:12-17; Luke 22:7-16

³ Luke 22:24-30

waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel that He had wrapped around Him. So He came to Simon Peter. Peter asked Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered him, "You do not understand now what I am doing, but later you will know."

Peter told Him. "You will assuredly never wash my feet."

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter told Him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus told him, "The person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet. He is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you."

For He knew who would betray Him. That was why He said, "Not all of you are clean."

After He had washed their feet and put on His outer garments, He reclined at the table again. He asked them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and you are right, because I am. Therefore if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly I tell you, a slave is not greater than his master is, and one who is sent is not greater than the one who has sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."⁴

Then He took a cup and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you, from now on I shall certainly not drink what comes from the vine until the kingdom of God comes."⁵

M: Here ends the reading.

Significant Problem – Last Day in the Garden
Sermon for Ash Wednesday
Genesis 3:19

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

⁴ John 13:1-17

⁵ Luke 22:17-18

The text for our sermon tonight is Genesis 3:19 “**You will eat bread in the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground. For you were taken from it. For you are dust and you will return to dust.**”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Next to Good Friday, Ash Wednesday is the most sombre day on the Christian calendar. It is the day we remember that *we are dust and will return to dust*.

God addressed these words to Adam immediately after the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. God had given Adam dominion over His creation to protect and preserve it, and that had been Adam’s attitude while he still possessed the image of God. But a terrible change came over Adam when he lost God’s image and instead took on a sinful image after disobeying God and eating the fruit of the tree in the garden. Remember how Adam and Eve’s “*eyes were opened*” (Gen. 3:7) and how Adam had tried to hide from God, lied to God, and tried to take advantage of his wife by shifting his blame. “*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it,*” he said (Gen. 3:12). We see these same trends in the human race today. God’s human creatures, designed initially to exercise God-like dominion over creation, now take advantage of it and exploit it. Ugly words have entered our vocabularies, like *smog, pollution, acid rain, endangered species, and abortion*. It’s clear why God would not want such creatures to have unlimited dominion over His creation. Anyhow, God informed Adam of all the negative consequences of his and Eve’s disobedience in eating the fruit of the tree from which He had instructed them not to eat. God had warned Adam and Eve that they would surely die if they ate the fruit from that tree. But they did not obey God and instead followed the tempting words of Satan and ate the fruit from that tree.

From that day on, death followed, just as God said it would. God had formed Adam from the dust of the ground, and God’s statement to Adam, “**you are dust,**” acknowledged His creation of Adam from the dust of the ground. Then the words “**you will return to dust**” acknowledged Adam’s pending physical death and the decay and returning to the ground that death would bring. Adam was formed from the ground and would return to the ground. “**For you are dust and you will return to dust.**”

There is also an eternal spiritual death that the sin of Adam and Eve brought into the world that day. An eternal estrangement and separation from God. Banishment from Him, His love, His mercy, and His compassion. Adam would live the rest of his days remembering those sobering words from God. How he must have wished that he could turn the hands of time back and undo what he and Eve had done, but it *was* done. **“For you are dust and you will return to dust.”**

Unfortunately, you and I are conceived and born facing the same problem Adam had following his sin. As Paul writes in Romans 5, *“Therefore, ... sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death also spread to all people, since all have sinned”* (5:12). Adam’s fall has brought sin to all humanity. We have inherited his guilt and the desire to sin. The statement made by God to Adam is just as valid when spoken to us: Remember, **“you are dust and you will return to dust.”**

This is a significant problem and is one that we do not like to think about. Our own death, the fact that we shall one day go into the earth, is not something we like to think about. It makes us uncomfortable. And our society makes it very easy to avoid remembering that we are dust. From advertising to books to movies, so often the impression is given that life in this world goes on forever, that we are invincible, and that somehow we are the exception to death! We convince ourselves that maybe we can somehow avoid it if we don’t think about it. And so, many people go through life avoiding that one final earthly reality until they are right at death’s doorstep. God reminds us tonight, **“you will return to dust.”**

Therefore, as people who remember that we are dust, we gather here on this Ash Wednesday and repent of our sins. We confess; we admit our sin and sinfulness before God and one another. We express our sorrow for our sins. We ask God to forgive our sins. We ask God to help us amend our sinful life and live a more God-pleasing life.

And yet, even more important than remembering that *we* are dust is the fact that *God* has remembered that we are dust. In Psalm 103, the psalmist informs us that God *“certainly knows what He has fashioned. He remembers that we are dust”* (Psalm 103:14). And in the Scriptures, whenever God remembers His people, He always acts on behalf of His people, to bless His people.

In fact, God had already remembered us and all of His people even before He told Adam, **“you are dust and you will return to dust.”** Just four verses

before God spoke these words to Adam, He first addressed Satan, saying, “*I shall make you and the woman hostile to each other and shall make your descendants and her Descendant hostile to each other. He will crush your head and you will crush His heel*” (Gen. 3:15). On that very same significant day, God assured Satan that He was going to send One who would crush his head. This points to Christ and His defeat of Satan on the cross. We see the fulfilment of this promise early in the Saviour’s life when Herod tried to kill Him. We see another fulfilment immediately after Christ’s public inauguration into His work when Satan tempted Him to forget His Father’s plan. And on that evil Friday that Christians call “Good,” Satan struck His enemy’s heel with a ferocity that cost the Saviour His life.

But Satan’s hostility against the woman’s offspring was futile because “*He will crush your head.*” The serpent’s crushed head spells defeat. As it was through the woman that Satan brought sin and death into the world, God would conquer sin, death, and Satan through the woman’s offspring. John writes, “*The purpose for which the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the Devil*” (1 John 3:8).

Remembering that we are dust, God the Father has acted on behalf of us and all people by sending His only Son to live among us. Jesus completely and voluntarily took upon Himself all sin and all evil, even the penalty for sin and evil: death itself. He Himself went into the earth, into the dust of the ground, as He was buried in a tomb. Worst of all, He endured the penalty of spiritual death there on the cross as He was abandoned and forsaken by His Father and cried out, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matt. 27:46).

But He would not remain in the dust of the earth. On the third day, He would rise from the dust of the earth, just as He predicted He would. And so shall we. On the day He returns, we and all believers in Jesus Christ will rise from the dust of the earth with new, glorified bodies that are incorruptible and no longer subject to sin. Bodies that are immortal, no longer subject to death. Paul writes, “*The body is sown in decay: it is raised without decay. It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness: it is raised in power*” (1 Cor. 15:42-43).

There’s an old expression that maybe you’re familiar with: “Left in the dust.” For example, when there’s a race taking place and one runner pulls away from the other, the announcer may say that the runner who pulled away “left the other runner in the dust.” In other words, he left the runner behind.

So, we thank God for not “leaving us in the dust.” He has not abandoned us. He has not left us behind. Just the opposite is the case. He has come here in the person of Jesus Christ to make sure that we would be lifted from the dust of the earth. Just as Christ rose physically, bodily, from the grave, we, too, will join Him “*in the likeness of His resurrection*” (Romans 6:5). Of this, it is certain. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

<p style="text-align: center;">26 February 1 Lent</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1 March Mid-week LENTEN SERVICE</p>
<p>8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC</p>	<p>7.30pm TMBA Vespers</p>

