



Ash Wednesday
1 Thessalonians
Feb. 26, 2020
St. Johns Lutheran
Park Rapids, MN

The Opening Hymn “Christ, the Life of All the Living” LSB 420 st. 1-5

The Ash Wednesday Address

P: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: 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.

P: In this holy season the Son of God humbles Himself so that we receive mercy.

C: Humble me once again, O God, that my life would be pleasing and acceptable to You.

P: In this holy season the Son of God prays for us so that we are made one with Him and each other.

C: Help me to faithfully pray, O God, that my prayers would be pleasing and acceptable to You.

P: In this holy season the Son of God lives a perfect life so that we receive His perfection.

C: Fill me with Your Spirit, O God, that my life and actions would be pleasing and acceptable to You.

P: In this holy season the Son of God enters into His Passion and death so that we are exalted.

C: Grant me Your grace, O God, that my faith in Jesus would be pleasing and acceptable to You.

P: Give us true repentance; forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance and our deliberate sins; and grant us the grace of Your Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to Your holy word.

A time of silence is observed for self-reflection.

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

C: have mercy.

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

C: grant us Your peace.

The Imposition of Ashes

Worshippers are invited to come quietly to the front of the church and receive ashes on their foreheads with the words from Mark 1:15, “Repent and believe the Gospel,” as a token of their repentance in the Lord. If you choose not to receive the ashes, you are invited to meditate quietly in your pew.

P: Though the ashes represent our innumerable sins, the immeasurable love of Jesus covers them all. This is a true and trustworthy saying: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, I announce to you the grace of God. Your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

The Hymn “Christ, the Life of All the Living” LSB 420 st. 6-7

The Order of Evening Prayer

LSB 243

Preparing to Hear - Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

- Written by the Apostle Paul circa 51 AD
- Thessalonica was capital of the province of Macedonia in the Roman Empire, as well as a coastal city, and an important trading center. Gentile, pagan culture dominated the area, and Christian kindness would have been completely new to them.

- Saint Paul's intention with this letter is to get back in touch with this new mission plant congregation full of new believers. Because of persecution by enemies of the Christian faith, Paul and his companions have been separated from the congregation in Thessalonica.
- As children in the faith, the Thessalonians needed more instruction from their pastors, especially:
 1. Help navigating the pagan culture of their city.
 2. Encouragement to live with Christian kindness and purity, even in a place where self-centeredness and the contamination of the ways of this world were rampant.
 3. Further teaching about the hope of resurrection in Christ.

Things to Listen for in First Thessalonians

- Saint Paul expresses thankfulness for the faith God gave to the Thessalonians, especially how even as new Christians they set an example for believers everywhere by suffering persecution even from their own kinsfolk, and their faith didn't waver.
- God's power against persecution and the evil intentions of mankind is a major theme. The Thessalonians are to trust in their suffering that the Word of God will endure.
- Similarly, God's instruction is emphasized over and above human teaching; the Word of God is weighty-it's always completely trustworthy, and it should be obeyed above all.
- Saint Paul offers insight into the Last Day and the Resurrection of the dead, but he doesn't focus only on that--his teaching deals also with issues of everyday life in this world.
- As with any sermon, the apostle's words remind those who hear them that God is at work, and He is always faithful.
- Listen for ways that the Christians are encouraged to continue the good habits they've begun, and not to let sin gain ground.
- Listen for ways that the Christians need to mend their lives and align themselves with the instruction and training of Jesus.
- Listen for the work of Jesus in the hearts and lives of believers, and for the hope of the resurrection that He will bring to us.
- Key Memory Verses:
 - 4:16-18: "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And

so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words."

- 5:23-24: "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it."

P: In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.

C: But now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.

Hebrews 1:1-2a

The Hymn

"The Church's One Foundation"

LSB 644

Reading and Hearing

1 Thessalonians

Thanksgiving for the Congregation at Thessalonica (Chapters 1-3)

- The word of the Lord grows on pagan soil
- Paul's ministry in Thessalonica
- The word under persecution
- Separations and re-establishing contact
- Prayer

Exhortations (4:1-5:22)

- On marriage
- On brotherly love and self-sufficiency
- On clarifying concerns about the end times
- Those who have fallen asleep
- The coming of the Day of the Lord
- On life in the congregation
- Pastoral care among the congregation
- The evaluation of prophecy

Benediction, Prayer, and Instruction (5:23-28)

- God is faithful
- Pray for us
- Pass along the message

The Response Hymn

"Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways"

LSB 707

The Litany Prayers (spoken)

LSB 249

The Closing Hymn

“*The Day Thou Gavest*”

LSB 886

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Taking It Home

Thursday – Read I Thessalonians 1:1-2:16

This letter was from Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy to the Christians in Thessalonica. Why is it important that Christians, even “super-Christians” like Paul often seems to be, have Christian companions? Who are some of your Christian companions?

Saint Paul writes how thankful he is for the Thessalonian Christians. How does his thankfulness express itself (1:2-3)?

How did the Thessalonians’ faith show itself in their lives (1:6-7)?

Verses 9 and 10 mention two things the Thessalonian Christians did after turning toward God and away from idols. They’re two essential facets of the Christian faith and life. What are they?

To whom does Saint Paul look for deliverance from the coming wrath?

Toward the beginning of chapter two, Saint Paul says that they met opposition in spreading the Gospel, but they persevered in sharing the good news anyway. Christians in the United States don’t yet experience persecution like Paul did, but we are still tempted to camouflage our faith when we know it’ll be unpopular to those around us. Whose opinion is the only one that matters, according to I Thess. 2:1-8? How did the apostle Paul approach the Thessalonians?

How does Saint Paul feel about the Thessalonian Christians?

Some people read 2:16 and try to find the historical event that matches the wrath of God mentioned there, but this particular past-tense verb isn’t there to say that it’s already happened, but rather that God’s wrath that is coming on those who oppose Him is already assured.

In what ways have you treated God’s Word as though it’s no more important than the words of human beings? What does it look like to treasure God’s Word for the dynamic, life-changing word that it is?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for placing fellow Christians in my life, to be my companions on this journey of faith, to encourage me in the gospel, to hold me accountable to your word, and to be examples for me of Your care and service to Your children. By Your Holy Spirit, empower me to endure in faith through difficult times and to encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ. In the name of Jesus, my Savior, amen.

Friday – Read I Thessalonians 2:17-4:12

Toward the end of chapter 2, Saint Paul talks about the persecution he endured. What kept Paul from visiting Thessalonica again?

In 3:1-5, the apostle makes a sacrifice on behalf of the Thessalonians. What is it? Why does he consider that sacrifice to be worthwhile?

What did Timothy report back to the apostle Paul?

What is Saint Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians (3:11-13)?

The Thessalonians have kept their faith, but they’re not perfect. Reading between the lines and judging from Paul’s warnings and instructions in 4:1-12, what are some ways in which the Thessalonians are struggling?

In some ways, like we heard a couple Sundays ago, a sin is a sin is a sin is a sin. Why, then, does Paul talk so much about sexual impurity? Why is that such a big deal to him? What does the apostle say about a Christian who disregards God’s instruction on sexual purity (4:3-8)?

Paul gives some interesting advice to Christians who strive to care for one another and to live as Christians in a culture that’s totally antithetical to the life of faith. Perhaps our situation isn’t so far removed from that of the Thessalonians. Although there are times when sin ought to be publicly condemned, what does Saint Paul urge the believers in Thessalonica to do?

Prayer: Almighty God and Father, without whose help and blessing all labor is in vain, remember me in my work today. If it’s Your will, give me a prosperous day and lead me to find satisfaction and contentment in the tasks at hand. May all my work be done well, that I may glorify You with honest work; for the sake of Him who completed His work for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday - Read I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Apparently when Timothy reported back to Paul after visiting the Thessalonian Christians, he had good news to report (they've kept the faith, even in the midst of persecution), bad news to report (they're going to need to hear more about what it means to live in the purity to which Christ has called all Christians), and some questions the Thessalonians wanted to ask the apostle (concerning believers who die and resurrection in Jesus Christ). What are some questions you have concerning the death and resurrection of the faithful departed?

Paul says that Christians don't grieve as those who have no hope, but he doesn't say that Christians don't grieve. There is a place for mourning and for tears, even in the death of a Christian. What does it mean to grieve, and yet still hope? In what do you place your hope when a loved one dies?

Some Christians take verse 17 to say that God will raise up believers to eternal life, but other people will be left behind. In the original language, the word for "caught up" has the sense of suddenness and violent action. Look at I Corinthians 15:51-57. Is there likely to be any amount of time between the rising of the dead and the rising of believers who are still alive?

What's the point of teaching about the resurrection of all believers (4:18)?

When will the day of the Lord happen?

If we don't know when the day will come, how is it that Christians can be prepared for it? What does it mean to be children of the light, and what connection does that have to soberly waiting for the day of the Lord?

Prayer: Almighty God, by the death of Your Son Jesus Christ You destroyed death, by His rest in the tomb You sanctified the graves of Your saints, and by His bodily resurrection You brought life and immortality to light so that all who die in Him abide in peace and hope. Receive our thanks for the victory over death and the grave that He won for us. Keep us in everlasting communion with all who wait for Him on earth and with all in heaven who are with Him, for He is the resurrection and the life, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sunday – Read I Thessalonians 5:12-28

In 5:12-22, Saint Paul gives about 20 different instructions for the Christians in Thessalonica. What all does he tell them to do?

Why might Paul be telling them to admonish, or warn, those who are idle? How could idleness be an issue? Can it endanger faith?

In 5:15, it's challenging that there are no qualifiers—there's no "except," or "unless," or "some." It's "no one" repaying evil for evil, "always" doing good, to "everyone." There's no room for exceptions here. What are some ways that you've repaid evil for evil in the last week? What are some concrete ways you can strive to do good to everyone around you today, tomorrow, and in the coming week?

How can Saint Paul tell a church under persecution to "rejoice always" and to "give thanks in all circumstances" (5:16, 18)? If/when American Christians are under persecution, will we be able to do that? Why or why not?

What kind of behavior quenches or grieves the Holy Spirit?

Saint Paul warns the Thessalonian Christians to abstain from every form of evil. That warning applies to every Christian today also. C.S. Lewis describes every act of a Christian as either gaining ground in the battle against Satan or losing ground to him. Every sin is like losing another hill from which the devil can launch his next attack. On the other hand, every time we resist temptation or follow God's instruction, we have gained the next hill and broadened our defenses against the flaming arrows of hell's archers. What does it mean to abstain from even every form of evil?

If you'd like an excellent but also an easy memory verse, look no further than I Thessalonians 5:24!

If even Paul needed his fellow brothers and sisters to pray for him, how much do you need other Christians to pray for you every day? How well have you followed Paul's instructions in verse 26? (Ha, ha, just kidding!)

In 5:27 Paul writes, "I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the [believers]." How do his strong words here speak to what he believes about the study of God's Word?

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, through Your Son You have promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek Your help and, by a true and lively faith in Your Word, obtain all that You have promised; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.