OCentral United Methodist Church 3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

presolary

ORDER OF WORSHIP February 22, 2023 • 6:00pm

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return

PRELUDE

INVITATION

All My Trials [arr. Phillip Keveren] Monica Adams

Judy Avila

Pastor Lee

PART I: REPENTANCE

Ash Wednesday is the starting point of Lent. During Lent, we focus on **repentance and reconciliation**. Let us talk about **repentance** first. Repentance means turning around. We need to turn around. We were going in the world, and now turn around! Turn to God.

Many people would say that we were going in the right direction. We were law abiding citizens, God-fearing congregation, mission-oriented church, and welcoming congregation. It was Soeren Kierrkegaad, Danish philosopher, who defined an idol as something "good" that we love more than God.

Many people pray for the healing of their beloved ones. When the person restores his or her health, we all restore our faith again. Our faith becomes stronger. When the person dies, however, some lose their faith, and some keep their faith. If I died at the car accident site, would my wife praise God without reservation? It is not an easy question for us to answer right away! It is an opportunity for us to see whether we truly serve God or not. That is why we need to take time to meditate during Lent. Repentance brings us to the prayer that Jesus had at the Garden of Gethsemane. "Not my will, but Thy will be done!"

We love our family, but when we love our family more than God our family becomes an idol. It sounds strange but think about this. When we lose a family member how would you feel? Do you want to say like Job in the Bible? It is God who gave me a child and now it is God who takes my child away. May God's name be praised! If you can say that your family is not an idol. However, if you want to act like Job's wife, curse God and die, then your family is an idol. When we talk about repentance, we talk about our priority. Do we worship God more than anything else? Lent is a time to meditate on that. We need to work hard for our businesses and jobs. But do I take Sunday off to worship God even when I have financial loss because of it? We need to take care of our family, but do I give my tithe to God even when my financial situation is challenging? Can I make an adjustment in my personal lifestyle to worship God? How much can I give up?

There is no right or wrong answer here. Lent is a good time for all of us to repent, to meditate on the values and priorities of our lives. What do I actually worship? Do I worship God or something else in God's name?

Sometimes I meet people who argue that religions are the root of wars. People kill other people in the name of God! I ask this question back to those people: "If we do not have religions, do we live peacefully? If we do not worship God, do we not invade other countries?"

People will have wars; people invade other countries to have what they want with or without God. Think about Putin in Russia and Xi in China. They do not worship God. Some just have done it in the name of God. Some just do it without God. People are using God's name in vain to satisfy their own desires. It has nothing to do with the teachings of religions. Root of wars is the evil in our minds. We are self-centered, self-righteous, and selfish. We focus on our survival first. We use all the means to secure our survival and use religions many times even against the teachings of religions. Do not blame God. Do not use God's name in vain, either. Let us meditate on the words of prophet Joel.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17	Joe Krider

SILENT MEDITATION

THANKSGIVING OVER THE ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, so that we may remember that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Pastor Lee

Pastor Lee & Pastor Hou

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

All those who repent their sins and want to reconcile with God, please come and confess your mortality and experience God's Grace. **Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**

HYMN	Breathe on Me, Breath of God	UMH #420
SECOND SCRIPTURE READING	Psalm 51:1-17	Julie Campero
SILENT MEDITATION		
ANTHEM	<i>Give Me Jesus</i> [arr. Mark Patterson] (offering collected for local flood victims)	Chancel Choir Patrick Langham, Saxophone
HYMN	Thy Holy Wings, O Savior	UMH #502
PART II: RECONCILIATION		Pastor Lee

Reconciliation means restoration of the relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior who died for us on the Cross, God allows us to have an intimate relationship with God again. That is reconciliation.

For reconciliation, we have to turn around like the prodigal son in Luke 15. Why am I here? In my Father's house,

even the hired workers enjoy their lives! I am suffering here without even the basic necessities for my life!

I want to go back to my Father! We need to acknowledge that we are in deep darkness. We are helpless. We cannot fix our problems in our lives. We do not know what to do. We accept the fact that from dust we came, to dust we shall return.

When we accept our ultimate reality as mortal bodies, God's grace works in us. We do not live our lives, but Christ lives in us and we in Christ. We do not face all the challenges of lives with our own strengths, but with God's almighty power. We can even conquer the death. We are free from the power of Sin and Death!

THIRD SCRIPTURE READING	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Debbie Hernandez		
SILENT MEDITATION				
OFFERTORY	His Eye is On the Sparrow	Patrick Langham, Saxophone Monica Adams		
PART III: RESOLUTION As a forgiven and reconciled people, we will follow Jesus!				
GOSPEL READING	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21	Mary Juarez Dalton		
SILENT MEDITATION				
HYMN	Jesus, Lover of My Soul	UMH #479		
BENEDICTION		Pastor Lee		
POSTLUDE	Abide with Me [William H. Monk]	Monica Adams		

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee & Rev. Viseth Hou, Ministers Judy Avila, Joe Krider, Julie Campero, Debbie Hernandez, & Mary Juarez Dalton, Worship Leaders Patrick Langham, Saxophone Ric Campero, Choir Director Monica Adams, Organist/Pianist Cherie Hudson, Facilities Coordinator David Campero, Livestream Mark Wharff, Media Rupert Cooper, Audio