

Wednesday, February 17: *Ash Wednesday*

Readings: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17;
2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 6:16-21

Prayer: *Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*²

Focal Verse: “But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret ...” Matthew 6:3-4

Reflection: We live our faith in the One who is coming soon. During the wait, pressing human needs are always with us. Some needs and some people are easier for us to see than others. During the wait, some questions press hard on Christian faith.

Why do we have what we have?

When we focus on scarcity, it seems as though there isn’t enough of anything, that God hasn’t been generous. As a result, our faith shrinks down to what little can be seen. But with faith we can see abundance, for more than enough. Once we become aware of God’s abundance, we may also realize that there is more than enough of all God’s gifts. God’s abundance is at the heart of the Bible.

What do you have that you did not receive?
Why do you have what you have?

We have what we have so that we bear fruit. We have what we have so that we build up the church. We have what we have so that we wait well.

Luke 12:48 refers directly to God’s expectations of how we handle the things entrusted to our care: “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” This verse is part of a larger discussion on how well Christ’s stewards wait for his return.³

1

Respond gratefully

to what God has first given us. All that we do is a response to God’s grace. Everything we are, have, and use comes from God. Best of all, God gives the gift of Jesus Christ and the community of believers. It all begins with God. Our confession of faith in Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior is not of our doing. Grateful stewards put God first.

“... but they gave themselves first to the Lord.”
2 Corinthians 8:5

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

² Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Augsburg Fortress.

³ Golv, John L., *Our Stewardship: Managing Our Assets*, © 2002, Augsburg Fortress, p. 17, 19-21.