

SERMON 917

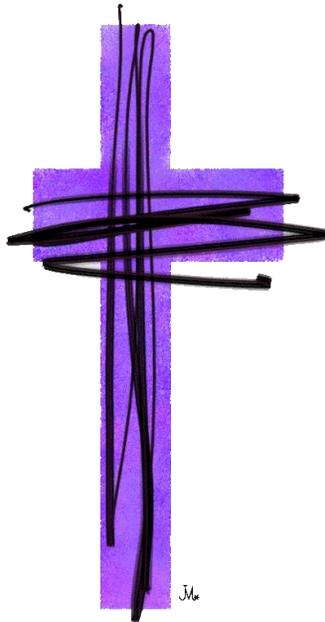
February 18, 2015

Ash Wednesday

985th Week as Priest

812th Week at St Dunstan's

77th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee



THE DAY OF THE LORD, THE DAY OF SALVATION.

*Grace to you, and peace, from God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.*

When the minor prophet Joel spoke of the Day of the Lord, he was joining with a long line of the Old Testament prophets in a common theme, the destruction of Israel as punishment for its sins. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Ezekiel, all of the great prophets had seen a vision of the Day of the Lord. It was to be a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds and thick darkness, a day of weeping and mourning. It was to be a day of vengeance and retribution.

If the story had ended there, we would not have known Christ and the surpassing joy of his mercy and

grace. But in the fullness of time, God sent his only Son Jesus to save us from our sins, from our own sad selves, and to secure us by his death on a cross.

And lest we think that we as Christians are somehow better, or smarter, or more deserving than the people of the Old Covenant—or any other people, for that matter—we are reminded on this Ash Wednesday that we are alive, rejoicing, and possessing everything only by God’s mercy and grace—and nothing more, and nothing less.

The Day of the Lord has been changed to a Day of Salvation, but for this we gain no great status or eternal reward. No, we have done nothing except to respond to the incarnate God who has come among us as one who saves, he who is God himself, Emmanuel.

What is now clear to us is the need to respond with loving hearts and minds. “As we work together with him,” said Paul, “we urge you not to accept the grace of God in vain.”

Now is the day of salvation. Now is the fullness of time. As we begin this Season of Lent, Jesus is calling us to a deeper life of faith, a stronger practice of living, and a kinder regard for our neighbors and our selves.

These forty days are not just about giving up dessert or Facebook; this is a time for self-discipline and self-examination. It is a time to put away those thoughts and actions which are not healthy or life-giving, and to put on the armor of Christ.

So please join me in the new life in Christ, and in the Observance of a Holy Lent that will lead us to the Holy City Jerusalem, to Christ's death and resurrection, and to the Day of our Salvation. **AMEN.**