

Lenten Resources for 2017

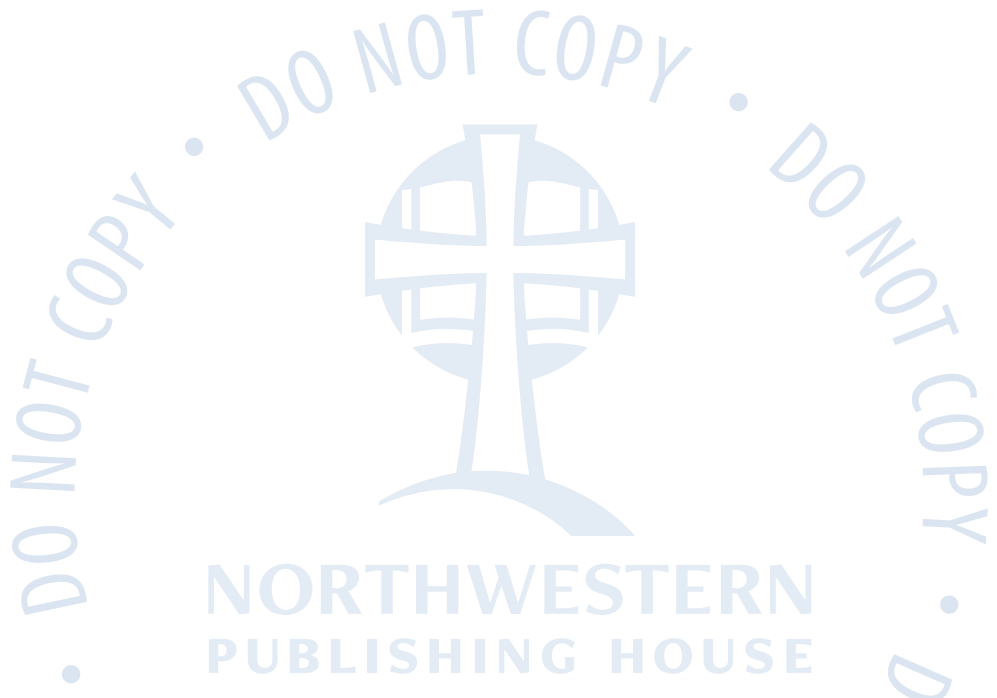
“Repent: Turn to Jesus!” is the theme of the Northwestern Publishing House resources for the 2017 Lenten season. Special notes are given for congregations using any one of these hymnals: *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal (CW)*, *Christian Worship: Supplement (CWS)*, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary (ELH)*, *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, *Lutheran Worship (LW)*, and *The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)*.

Services

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Ash Wednesday/Midweek 1 | Repent: Turn to Jesus and Not to Yourself..... | Luke 18:9-14 |
| Midweek 2 | Repent: Turn to Jesus; Do Not Turn Away | Matthew 27:1-5 |
| Midweek 3 | Repent: Turn to Jesus; He Holds the Key to Heaven..... | Luke 23:35-43 |
| Midweek 4 | Repent: Turn to Jesus; He Longs to Forgive You | Luke 23:32-34 |
| Midweek 5 | Repent: Turn to Jesus; He Changes Your Life | Luke 7:44-50 |
| Midweek 6 | Repent: Turn to Jesus When You Face Temptations..... | Mark 14:32-38 |
| Maundy Thursday | Repent: Turn to Jesus and Receive a Special Assurance of Your Forgiveness..... | 1 Corinthians 11:23-28 |
| Good Friday | Repent: Turn to Jesus; He and He Alone Finished Your Salvation | John 19:17-30 |
| Easter Sunday | Repent: Turn to Jesus for Resurrection and Life | Luke 24:1-8 |

This kit includes:

- Sermon helps, including complete texts of the nine sermons
- Resources for the nine services that include the following:
 - Notes and suggestions for using the orders of service
 - Sermon themes and texts
 - Hymn and psalm suggestions
 - Psalm prayers
 - Scripture reading suggestions
 - Copy master for a midweek order of service
- CD with electronic files of the resources
- Sample bulletin available from Northwestern Publishing House



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Lenten Resources for 2017

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General introduction to “Repent: Turn to Jesus!”

The overall theme for the Lenten sermons for 2017 is “Repent: Turn to Jesus!” The theme “Repent: Turn to Jesus!” flows from the critical questions that occasioned the Ninety-five Theses and thereby the Lutheran Reformation: What is the essence of repentance? Is repentance the act of “doing penance”—making satisfaction for sin? Or is repentance something else entirely? Repentance, Luther came to see, is God’s gracious gift to us. Luther proclaimed the biblical truth that the believer’s entire life is a life of repentance—a daily return to the saving waters of Baptism.

The series includes nine sermons: six midweek Lenten sermons, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

A reminder to worship planners that the Service of Light (CW p. 54) is best used during Advent. Evening prayer (CW p. 52) is a more satisfying option for Lent.

A copy master for a midweek service, which is a revised order of Evening Prayer, is included on the last page.

Suggestions are given for using the order of service Prayer at the Close of Day (Compline) found in *Christian Worship: New Service Settings* (© 2002 NPH) and *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* (© 2004 NPH), as well as in other Lutheran hymnals. These settings require a commitment to learning a significant amount of music. Compline, however, may also be prayed with a minimum of sung responses. The repentant tone that resonates throughout the order of Compline will serve well for this year’s series.

Additional worship suggestions in this kit have references to *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* (CWOS). These include special services for Ash Wednesday and Holy Week. In addition to descriptions of the special symbolism in the texts of these services, CWOS also includes special music that is in the *CWOS Accompaniment Edition*. See the Notes for the Pastor and Musician in that edition and on the CD for fuller explanations of the services and music.

May the Lord of the church bless your Lenten and Easter planning and worship as you lead your congregation to “repent and turn to Jesus.”

Notes on the use of Evening Prayer (Vespers)

For congregations using Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal

- If the Alternate Beginning on page 54 is used, the Opening Hymn may be omitted.
- The Psalm Prayer suggested in the service resources may be used after the psalm is sung or read on page 56.
- The Seasonal Response on page 56 can be read by the pastor or by the congregation. A choral arrangement can also be found in the settings of the Seasonal Responses available from Northwestern Publishing House, stock #LR28N0009E.
- If the “Song of Mary” is sung, you may use the hymnal setting or alternate settings that are found in *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*.

Notes on the use of Prayer at the Close of Day (Compline)

This order of service for the end of the day is found in *Christian Worship: New Service Settings* and *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*. It is a version of the ancient order of Compline, which is also found in other Lutheran hymnals. Where the psalm occurs in the service, the suggested psalm for the midweek service may be used with or without Psalm 91. The lesson may be the Passion History for the service. The sermon may be given after the hymn that follows the lesson. The offerings may be gathered after the sermon. The service then concludes with the prayers, the Lord's Prayer, Gospel canticles, and blessing.

Notes on the Psalms

Taking our cue from the repentance theme of the Ninety-five Theses, this Lenten series features the penitential psalms. Because of their importance in the life of the church, several options for each psalm have been supplied.

Alternate psalm choices and suggested hymns from *Christian Worship: Supplement* (© 2008 NPH) are included for each service.

The additional musical options suggested for the midweek services will be well received by God's people. Worship planners will do well to become familiar with these resources:

- *The People's Psalter*, Hal Hopson, NPH order no. 274627.
- *Psalms for the Church Year, Volume I*, David Haas/Marty Haugen, NPH order no. 278082.

Notes on the choice of hymns

For each service, hymns have been suggested based on the theme of the sermon. Many other Lenten hymns may also work well for the service based on local needs. Several hymns from the Confession and Absolution section of the hymnal have been selected for this year's series.

Notes on the use of the CD

The CD included with this kit has electronic files of the sermons and worship resources. Permission is given to modify and print out these files as desired. Please include the NPH copyright notice in worship bulletins. See the README file on the CD for a complete listing of the contents and how to use the files.

Ash Wednesday/Midweek 1

REPENT: TURN TO JESUS AND NOT TO YOURSELF

Service Resources

Psalm: Psalm 51a (CW & CWS)

Additional musical setting options:

The People's Psalter, pages 100,101

Psalms for the Church Year, Volume 1, page 20ff.

Psalm Prayer: Almighty and merciful Father, you freely forgive those who, as David of old, acknowledge and confess their sins. Create in us pure hearts, and wash away all our sins in the blood of your dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lessons:

Isaiah 59:12-20 or 2 Number 21:4-9*

2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:2 or 2 Corinthians 7:8-13*

Luke 18:9-14

or The Passion History

Sermon Text: Luke 18:9-14

Sermon Theme: Repent: Turn to Jesus and Not to Yourself

Hymn Suggestions:

| Title | CW(S) | ELH | LSB | LW | TLH |
|---|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Jesus, I Will Ponder Now | 98 | 287 | 440 | 109 | 140 |
| With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh | 303 | 455 | — | — | 323 |
| Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain | 106 | 412 | 435 | 96 | 149 |
| Jesus Sinners Does Receive (distribution) | 304 | 426 | 609 | 229 | 324 |
| Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God | 272 | — | 956 | 5 | — |

Notes on the Service

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, the church's 40-day journey of repentance and renewal in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Because of its unique character and place in the church calendar, Ash Wednesday deserves to be celebrated as a separate festival and not assimilated into the cycle of congregational midweek Lenten services. The Bible readings for Ash Wednesday (*Christian Worship: Manual*, page 403) issue a strong call for Lenten preparation that is lost if they are replaced by the beginning of the serial reading of the Passion History. Ash Wednesday's special call to repentance and renewal is not repeated during the Sundays in Lent because they are not properly part of the season (hence the nomenclature Sundays *in* Lent, rather than Sundays *of* Lent). Rather, these Sundays serve as "islands of refreshment" during the course of the season, in keeping with the emphasis that all Sundays are "little Easters." Because Ash Wednesday is a

major festival of the church year, The Common Service (CW, page 15) or the Service of Word and Sacrament (CW, page 26) serves as the liturgy. Celebrating the Lord's Supper is most appropriate, but it should be done with austerity in keeping with the character of the Lenten season. The music of the liturgy should be restrained: the Song of Praise ("Glory Be to God on High" or "O Lord, Our Lord"), "Alleluia," and other festive portions of the Ordinary should be omitted. An alternate version of the "Lord, Have Mercy" ("Kyrie") such as "Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above" (CW 266) may also be used. Black paraments are preferred over purple, in recognition of the solemnity of the day.

Imposition of Ashes

The ancient custom of placing ashes on each worshiper's forehead is incorporated into the rite called **Imposition of Ashes**. A form for this beginning of the Ash Wednesday service is found in *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*, page 147, and other Lutheran worship resources. We encourage congregations to consider using this symbolic worship form after careful instruction on the meaning of the rite.

*Suggested reading from *Planning Christian Worship: Revised* (available from the WELS Connect website).

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Lenten Sermons for 2017

Aaron L. Christie

Contents

Ash Wednesday/Midweek 1

Repent: Turn to Jesus and Not to Yourself

Luke 18:9-14

Midweek 2

Repent: Turn to Jesus; Do Not Turn Away

Matthew 27:1-5

Midweek 3

Repent: Turn to Jesus; He Holds the Key to Heaven

Luke 23:35-43

Midweek 4

Repent: Turn to Jesus; He Longs to Forgive You

Luke 23:32-34

Midweek 5

Repent: Turn to Jesus; He Changes Your Life

Luke 7:44-50

Midweek 6

Repent: Turn to Jesus When You Face Temptations

Mark 14:32-38 (Luke 22:45,46)

Maundy Thursday

Repent: Turn to Jesus and Receive a Special Assurance of Your Forgiveness

1 Corinthians 11:23-28

Good Friday

Repent: Turn to Jesus; He and He Alone Finished Your Salvation

John 19:17-30

Easter Sunday

Repent: Turn to Jesus for Resurrection and Life

Luke 24:1-8

Note:

Ash Wednesday was celebrated long before it became customary to hold five additional midweek Lenten services. The purpose of Ash Wednesday is distinct from the other Wednesday services. Ash Wednesday is dedicated to the preaching of repentance as the overarching theme of Lent. The succeeding midweek services are dedicated to preaching the Passion History. For this reason, Ash Wednesday is kept separate from the other midweek Lenten services.

In the unlikely event that men would be in a six-way rotation and *not* preach Ash Wednesday at their home parish, it is suggested that the Ash Wednesday sermon becomes a midweek

Sermon #6 for a midweek 1-6. If this is the case, the brother who preaches the Luke 18:9-14 sermon will simply need to rework the references to Ash Wednesday found in that sermon's introduction.



Ash Wednesday/Midweek 1
Repent: Turn to Jesus and Not to Yourself
Text: Luke 18:9-14

Almost 500 years ago, the world was turned upside down—not with a weapon of mass destruction but with an instrument of mass instruction—a man’s pen. A monk (technically a friar) by the name of Martin Luther penned 95 theses, or propositions, and nailed them to the university bulletin board of his day—the Castle Church door. Luther penned these theses for debate among the professional theologians of his day. At the theses’ heart was this practical question: What does it mean to repent?

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent” (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. (Luther, 95 Theses, No. 1)

Almost 500 years later, we are here on Ash Wednesday, not to debate theses but to confess our sins; not to nail words to a door but to hear words preached from a pulpit. Repentance is on our minds as another Lenten season begins. Repentance is on Jesus’ mind too. Tonight, he teaches us a key truth about repentance, not by debating 95 theses but by teaching us a parable about two men who went up to the temple to pray. As we listen in on their prayers, we will come to a better understanding of what it means to repent so that we can make our entire lives lives of repentance. May the Holy Spirit bless every one of you with a repentant heart tonight—a heart that **Turns to Jesus and Not to Yourself**.

Listen to Jesus’ parable once again. Picture a lamb burning on the temple altar as the sun is sinking low in the sky. Can you smell the incense wafting in the breeze? As you elbow your way through the mass of humanity in the temple courts, your focus narrows to a single man in that crowd. He spends plenty of time in the temple. He is well dressed in flowing robes. He’s all business—a religious professional from head to toe. He stands up, perhaps in the middle of the crowd, so that he can be clearly seen and heard. Then your eye catches another man over in the corner. He’s a tax collector—probably a tax cheat! No one would ever accuse him of being a saint. He is all alone. He is in rough shape. Can you see that picture? Listen!

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

The Pharisee had plenty to pray about. But did you notice what the Pharisee’s favorite word was? Lord? Heal? Help? Forgive? No, it was an ugly, all-consuming *I. I thank you. . . . I’m not*

like other men. . . . I fast twice a week. . . . I give a tenth of all I get. . . . The Pharisee is celebrating his own little “thanksgiving day” in the temple courts! He is most thorough when it comes to thanking God for himself, but he is absolutely amnesic when it comes to remembering God’s blessings. He doesn’t ask for a single thing from the heavenly Father, because he figures that he pretty much has everything he needs; even more, he IS EVERYTHING God wants! How lucky God was to have a guy like the Pharisee on his side! He wasn’t a robber. He was a big giver! He wasn’t a glutton. He was a disciplined faster! He wasn’t a man of the sinful masses. No, he was a spiritual cut above the rest! The Pharisee was doing just fine in his own estimation. Why bother turning to God in repentance when one can turn to himself and his own holiness for salvation?!

And then there is the other man in the parable: not a Pharisee but a publican; not a man full of himself but a man running on empty; not a man praying to be praised but a man praying to be forgiven; not a man bragging but a man repenting; a man turning—not toward himself but toward God!

In a time when most praying took place with heads held up toward heaven, the tax collector looked down in shame. At a time when most praying took place with hands held out, this man’s hands were clenched into fists that beat his chest in grief. His prayer? Short and simple: “*God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*” Literally, the tax collector was praying: “*God be appeased. . . .*” He knew there was nothing he could do to appease the wrath of God against his sin—praying and paying, fasting and washing could never make his sin “right” in God’s sight. He wasn’t the solution. He would have to turn toward another. God himself would have to appease his wrath toward sin! That’s precisely what Isaiah wrote of in our Old Testament lesson: “*He [the Lord] saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him*” (Isa 59:16). Tonight, we come to commemorate our Lord’s work of appeasing himself—through the suffering and death of his dear Son. Ash Wednesday—Christ’s great Lenten suffering and sacrifice—is a yearly answer, no, the ETERNAL answer, to the tax collector’s prayer!

So let me ask you this: Whom do you see when you look in the mirror in the morning? In your deepest heart of hearts, do you identify more with the Pharisee or the tax collector? Think of it. We’re Lutheran—Wisconsin Synod to boot. I might not fast twice a week, but I wasn’t down in New Orleans yesterday swilling cheap beer for beads either. I might not give a tenth of all I get, but I have my envelope with me tonight. I know that I’m saved by grace alone . . . and God also knows that I’m doing my best! What more could he possibly want? If we are quick and confident in identifying with the tax collector, then be very careful of being too humble—something that the Pharisees were good at too.

Brothers and sisters, this Ash Wednesday, will you trade in your soft, comfortable security blankets of self-righteousness for the sackcloth and ashes of genuine repentance? Why? Because turning toward ourselves isn’t only sinful; it’s nonsensical! Do you really think God is pleased that you are sitting in a pew right now? A potato can do that! Do you really think God is comparing you favorably over and against the Fat Tuesday drunks on Bourbon Street from last night? Isn’t God, instead, comparing you with his holy self (Mt 5:48)? Do you really think that God is impressed with offering envelopes? Why should he be impressed with an envelope in the

offering plate when he wants 100 percent of the heart in your chest? Could it be—just maybe—that God has a right to be sick and tired of us turning toward ourselves for vindication rather than turning toward him for salvation? Mercifully, the Lord rips the security blanket of self-righteousness from our sinful fingers: *“All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

The Pharisee thought he was God’s right-hand man. He thanked God that he wasn’t a robber; however, in his heart, he was. Jesus once told the Pharisees: *“Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness”* (Lk 11:39). The Pharisee fancied himself righteous. He wasn’t. Jesus said, *“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.”* The Pharisee considered himself faithful and free of all adultery. Sadly, he had cheated, not on his wife but on his God as he carried on a long, passionate love affair with himself. The point? Man at his “best” is man at his most dishonest! The Pharisee’s self-confidence is nothing but a false security of peace (Luther, 95 Theses, No. 95). Turning toward yourself simply serves as a detour on the road to hell—a place where the Pharisee has been humbled for the last 2,000 years.

The tax collector? He was humble. The Lord exalted him. The tax collector knew his sin. The Lord forgave him. In turning to Jesus, the tax collector was exalted! How? By Jesus’ own role reversal. The Lord of heaven became the criminal on the cross. The God who fills the universe filled a tomb. The Lord of glory became the Suffering Servant so that the Father’s wrath against sin could be appeased. Appeased, not by ignoring sin, but by punishing our sin in his Son. Jesus became the Chief of sinners upon the cross so that you and I—chiefs of sinners—could become sons and daughters. Listen and be amazed at Jesus’ role reversal. Our Lord is the ultimate example of the humble being exalted.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his
own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Php 2:5-11)

Underneath Rome there are caves called catacombs that go on for miles. You are probably aware that ancient Christians secretly worshiped in these catacombs during periods of persecution. Rome also contains what is likely the most ancient depiction of Jesus’ crucifixion—

in the form of some anti-Christian graffiti. Scratched into the plaster wall is the picture of a man kneeling before a cross with his arms raised in worship. Hanging on the cross is the figure of a man—with a donkey’s head. Scratched underneath that picture are the words “Alexamenos Worships His God.” The point? Alexamenos is a fool to worship a man who was crucified! But humble Alexamenos is now in heaven. The One pictured with the head of a donkey by a Roman heathen now sits on a throne. Alexamenos’ God, the tax collector’s God, YOUR God, has been appeased by the death of his Son in our place. So with repentant hearts, turn to him who sacrificed himself for you! With grateful hearts, receive his mercy anew every morning. With expectant hearts, look forward to Easter victory!

Jesus taught, and Luther believed, that a Christian’s entire life is a life of repentance—a lifelong turning away from ourselves and our works and a turning toward Christ and his work. It is not in the goodness of your works; the earnestness of your prayers; the zeal that you have for the Lord’s work; or the love and commitment that you have for your family, your church, or your country that saves you—not in the least.

The humble cross of Christ saves you! Like the tax collector in the corner, the cross doesn’t look like much. But look closer, because in the cross you find the Almighty appeased, a Father’s forgiveness, your God’s goodness, your Lord’s love, and your repentant prayers answered!

Turn to him. And only him. Always him. Amen.

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