

Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026 Scripture Readings

Joel 2:2-19

²a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful people;
their like has never been before,
nor will be again after them
through the years of all generations.

³Fire devours before them,
and behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them,
but behind them a desolate wilderness,
and nothing escapes them.

⁴Their appearance is like the appearance of horses,
and like war horses they run.

⁵As with the rumbling of chariots,
they leap on the tops of the mountains,
like the crackling of a flame of fire
devouring the stubble,
like a powerful army
drawn up for battle.

⁶Before them peoples are in anguish;
all faces grow pale.

⁷Like warriors they charge;
like soldiers they scale the wall.
They march each on his way;
they do not swerve from their paths.

⁸They do not jostle one another;
each marches in his path;
they burst through the weapons
and are not halted.

⁹They leap upon the city,
they run upon the walls,
they climb up into the houses,
they enter through the windows like a thief.

¹⁰ The earth quakes before them;
the heavens tremble.
The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their shining.
¹¹ The Lord utters his voice
before his army,
for his camp is exceedingly great;
he who executes his word is powerful.
For the day of the Lord is great and very awesome;
who can endure it?

Return to the Lord

¹² “Yet even now,” declares the Lord,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments.”
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.
¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the Lord your God?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
¹⁶ gather the people.
Consecrate the congregation;
assemble the elders;
gather the children,
even nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep
and say, “Spare your people, O Lord,
and make not your heritage a reproach,
a byword among the nations.”^[a]

Why should they say among the peoples,
‘Where is their God?’”

The Lord Had Pity

¹⁸Then the Lord became jealous for his land
and had pity on his people.

¹⁹The Lord answered and said to his people,
“Behold, I am sending to you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a reproach among the nations.

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

⁶Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For he says,

“In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Matthew 6:1-6

Giving to the Needy

6 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The Lord's Prayer

⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.