

Ash Wednesday (Year B)

First Reading - *Isaiah 58.1b,3b-9a*

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord says

to the people of Jacob:

I see your rebellion,

and I know your transgressions.

On the day of holy fasting and prayer,

you serve

your own interests,

you oppress your workers,

and you quarrel, and fight.

This is not the fasting

that will make your voice

heard on high.

If you deny yourself,

bow your head,

and lie down in sackcloth and ashes,

even this

is not the fasting

that I honour,

says the Lord.

The fast that I honour

is to remove

the bonds of injustice,

and to let the oppressed

go free.

The fast that I honour

is to share your bread

with the hungry,

to bring the homeless poor

into your house,

and not to hide away

from the needs

of those around you.

When this

becomes

your fast,

then

your light and your healing

will come,

your righteousness

will lead you on,

and the glory

of the Lord

will protect you.

Then

you will call,

and the Lord

will answer.

You will cry for help,

and the Lord

will hear.

This is the word of the Lord.

Second Reading - *1 Timothy 6.6-12a*

A reading from the first letter of Paul to Timothy.

We brought nothing into the world,

and we take nothing out.

So if we have food, and clothing, let us be

content with that.

For true riches are to be found

in godliness

combined with

contentment.

Those who long to be rich

in this world

fall into temptation, and are trapped

by many foolish and harmful desires

that plunge them

into ruin and destruction.

The love of worldly wealth

is the root

of all manner

of evil,

pulling people

away from the faith,

and repeatedly causing them

pain and distress.

So flee from all this,

and instead

seek righteousness, godliness,

faith, love,

patience, and gentleness.

Work always

to be strong in the faith,

holding fast to the eternal life

to which you are called.

This is the word of the Lord.

Gospel - *Matthew 23.37-39*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

according to Matthew.

Jesus said,

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

the city

that kills

the prophets,

and stones

the messengers

sent to you!

I have so often

longed

to gather your children

together,

as a hen

gathers her young

under her wings -

but you would not come!

I leave this temple

desolate.

And you will not

see me again

until the day when you say,

"Blessed is the one who comes

in the name of the Lord."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.