

WORSHIP KIT



By My Hand For My Sake



A SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES FOR LENT

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About “By My Hand, For My Sake”

Greetings!

The Service Series “By My Hand? For My Sake!” has been designed with your congregation in mind. Okay, what does that mean? That means **options, options, options**. Many options exist as you plan to use this Service Series in your worship. And we should add this—nothing here is carved in stone. Feel free to adapt the materials provided herein to your specific needs.

However, a major drawback to options is the confusion that they can cause. This is one full Service Series, and it’s easy to get lost in its pages. So, here are some pointers to help you get started.

First, become acquainted with the materials. That doesn’t mean you should read everything right now (although, if you have the time it’s not a bad idea). But look through the materials, noticing that there are monologs and homilies (they are different, and both are used in each service). There are prayers and music guides. There are notes for worship leaders. There is a CD. **Do read all the way through the section called The Old Rugged Cross**. It will introduce you to the materials in the packet, and will make you aware of some of the major, dramatic options that this Service Series provides.

Second, the CD is probably confusing, and should be explained right away. The CD contains the recorded monologs for each service. They are provided

with full sound effects and are read dramatically. These recorded monologs may be used in a number of ways. First, you may simply want to listen to them to help prepare for the reading (or memorization) of each monolog. Second, you could use the recordings in your worship—a recorded voice from an unseen speaker can carry a very somber mood, appropriate during the season of Lent. Third, you could provide a local radio station with this recording for use in their Lenten programming (purchase of this kit releases all copyright for the CD and its broadcast). Finally, you may want to disregard the CD altogether.

The first two tracks on the CD are a musical/dramatic prelude and postlude to each Lenten monolog. See the pages entitled “The Old Rugged Cross” for more information on their use. The last two tracks are the musical/dramatic prelude and postlude to the Easter monolog.

Of course, purchase of this kit provides full copyright release for the orders of service and the text of the promotional flier. Feel free to copy or adapt any of the material herein.

The Old Rugged Cross—Add Visual Impact

Have you ever made an **old rugged cross** to serve as a Lenten display? Many churches do, and they have learned that the more primitive and rustic it looks, the better. The most common material for an “old rugged cross” is last year’s Christmas tree trunk(s), the branches lopped off, two pieces nailed together, perhaps with a piece of crisscrossed rope (or heavy twine) at the intersection to give it an even more rustic look.

You can even put it in the Christmas tree stand—which is covered by draping it with a purple cloth, a very Lenten accent. Depending on the desired height, you could place the stand on a low table or some boxes, and drape that whole base in purple.

If you want to carry the concept a step further, it might be possible to **drape the cross** each week in a way that helps identify that week’s monologist. Here are some possibilities:

Adam or Eve—Green ivy (or green with white accents), to evoke the impression of Eden, and perhaps of a futile attempt to make clothes for oneself of leaves. It would probably have to be plastic at this time of year.

Nicodemus—A Jewish prayer shawl, off-white to ivory in color, with some dark blue stripes at either end, and long white knotted fringes.

Judas—A stark black drape ... along with some rope, giving the hint of a noose.

Barabbas—Something in a dirty brown, perhaps of burlap—best if torn and tattered and very rumped. A chain (suggesting manacles, imprisonment) might also be involved.

Pilate—The impression of a Roman toga can be given to a piece of white (or off-white) cloth by sewing to its hem that “up-over-down-over-up-over-down-over” pattern that looks sort of like the top of a castle. A pitcher and bowl might be at the foot of the cross.

The Thief’s Father—Instead of cloth, this week’s draping could be made of heavy ropes. A crown of thorns might be attached to the cross as well.

Peter—Fish net, including corks and bobbers, perhaps with a bunch of grapes and a sheaf of wheat attached. For Maundy Thursday, a Communion chalice might also be involved.

Centurion—For Good Friday, the cross might well be starkly bare. If the centurion’s red military cape is draping the cross through the monolog, he reverently removes it when he leaves, so that then the cross is bare.

Involving the Monologist

To carry this concept a step further, the person delivering the monolog at each service might engage in **dramatic actions**, perhaps entering by walking all the way down the aisle (while the CD intro is playing, or a soft organ selection) and doing something with a significant object at the foot of the cross. Similar action might also take place at the end of the monolog. Here are some ideas:

Adam or Eve—Walk down the aisle carrying a broad shallow basket (probably lined with plastic) filled with black dirt. Potting soil would work very well. In the basket might also be a gardening tool such as a trowel ... and maybe also some fruit, like pears and/or apples. Place it at the foot of the cross.

At the end of the monolog, pick up a piece of fruit and contemplate it for a moment before putting it back. Then lift a handful of dirt and let it fall back into the basket, keeping some to rub between your thumb and fingers so that some remains there. Then, lower your head as if thinking, and raise your hand as if scratching your forehead in thought. When your hand is removed, a smudge of dirt should remain on your forehead.

Following that action you may simply leave down the center aisle ... or, you might take the fruit from the basket and place it at the foot of the cross, and carry the basket (with dirt and tool) with you as you leave.

Nicodemus—Reminiscent of the nighttime visit to Jesus, you could carry in a lantern, placing it at the foot of the cross. You might also (or instead) carry containers to indicate the spices for Jesus' burial.

Leave resolutely. Whether or not you take the lantern with you is your choice, but do take the spices.

Judas—Carry in a money bag with large coins inside (someone's collection of half-dollars or silver dollars would be most appropriate!). Drop it heavily at the foot of the cross.

At the end of the monolog, pick up the money bag in such a way that it is open ... so that you can throw the coins down noisily, angrily. Then, after a moment, remove the rope from the cross, coil it in your hand, and leave quickly, almost running.

Barabbas—If you carry in a chain (or something similar to indicate a prisoner’s manacles), place it on the cross. Spend a long moment looking at it there, perhaps reaching out to touch it, before beginning your monolog.

At the end of the monolog, go to the cross and begin to remove the chain. But then stop ... and put it back ... and leave it there as you depart, obviously relieved.

Pilate—You might be carrying a towel as you come down the aisle. At the cross, pour water from the pitcher into the bowl and wash your hands, letting the water splash. Then wipe your hands with the towel, fold it carefully, and place it near the bowl and pitcher.

After the monolog, pick up the towel again, unfold it as if you are about to repeat the ritual ... then crumple it up and throw it down disgustedly. Look back at the cross for a long moment, then turn and shake your head ... and leave.

The Thief’s Father—Carry in the crown of thorns and place it on the cross.

At the end, gently remove the crown of thorns from the cross, and keep looking at it as you turn toward the congregation. Nod “yes” once, then look up (like toward the balcony) with a slight smile on your face ... and walk down the aisle.

Peter—When the monolog is finished, take the Communion chalice from the foot of the cross and carry it reverently to the altar, where it will soon be used in the Maundy Thursday celebration of the Eucharist.

Centurion—Unless the cross is to be left bare, or is already draped ... enter with a piece of material that resembles a Roman soldier's red cape, either carried on your arm or draped over your shoulder. With almost military precision, drape it over the cross. Whether or not you use the cape, come to attention facing the cross and give it a "Roman salute"—make a fist with your right hand and thump it sharply on your chest in the area of your left shoulder. Then begin.

When the monolog is finished, come to attention before the cross again. Remove the drape and fold it almost as you would a flag. You are not wearing your military cape as you leave, simply carrying it.

Costumes? Not necessary. The few props indicated here should be enough to let imagination have its way ... Unless you want to, of course. But in that case, do them well.

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By My Hand For My Sake

A SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES FOR LENT

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By My Hand For My Sake

A SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES FOR LENT

Ash Wednesday • Adam/Eve
Order Of Service

We Gather At The Cross.....As Sinners Forgiven
(Responses from Lamentations 1 and 3, and Psalm 51)

**Alas! And did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For sinners such as I?**

- L** *Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.*
- C** **My transgressions are like a yoke about my neck, fastened by the hand of the Lord. They weigh so heavily upon me that my strength is gone.**
- P** When we lift our hands in prayer to God in heaven, we should offer him our hearts and say, "We have sinned! We have rebelled against you!"

**Was it for sins that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!**

- P** You are kind, God! Please have pity on me.
- C** You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins. Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.
- P** I know about my sins, and I cannot forget my terrible guilt.
- C** You are really the one I have sinned against. I have disobeyed you and have done great wrong. So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me. I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.
- P** But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom.
- C** Wash me with hyssop until I am clean and whiter than snow. Let me be happy and joyful!
- P** You crushed my bones,
- C** now let them celebrate. Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt.
- P** Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again. Don't chase me away from you or take your Holy Spirit from me.

O Hope of ev'ry contrite soul,
 O Joy of all the meek,
 How kind you are to those who fall,
 How good to those who seek!

The Prayer Of The Day

To God all glory, praise, and love
 Be now and ever giv'n
 By saints below and saints above,
 The Church in earth and heav'n.

Homily

Hymn..... “Yet Even Now”

“Yet even now,” thus says the Lord,
 “Return to me with all your heart,
 With fasting and with tears of grief;
 Your hearts, and not your garments, part.”

Unto the Lord, your God, return,
Who sends his mercy from above;
For he is gracious, slow to wrath,
And he abounds in steadfast love.

The sinless Son of God was made,
For us, the One by sin defiled,
That we in him might righteous be
And with our Father reconciled.

Even as we return, O God,
Claiming your grace for Jesus' sake,
Turn now to us with heartfelt love
And leave a blessing in your wake.

Old Testament Lesson Joel 2:12-19

Responsory Hebrews 12:2

ℒ *Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.*

℣ **He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did.**

ℒ *Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne.*

℣ **Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.**

New Testament Lesson 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2

Monolog • Adam/Eve

Hymn.....melody: O Sacred Head

Remember, earth-born mortal,
The dust from which you came,
And know that life's last portal
Returns you to the same!
Let ashes tell the story,
From dust its lesson learn:
Beyond life's fleeting glory
To dust you shall return!

The Distribution Of Ashes

O God, you once did fashion
Our lives from earth's frail dust.
Through Jesus' Cross and Passion
Help us your grace to trust.
For Christ was born of Mary
Our mortal dust to share,
Our sin and guilt to carry,
Our ransom to prepare.

Let ashes be the token
Of heartfelt penitence
And of your promise spoken
To raise our bodies hence.
Have mercy on us mortals!
Let faith within us burn,
That even from death's portals
We may to life return!

The Prayers

Offering

Chief of sinners though I be,
Jesus shed his blood for me,
Died that I might live on high,
Lives that I might never die.
As the branch is to the vine,
I am his, and he is mine.

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

Peace, to soothe our bitter woes,
God in Christ on us bestows;
Jesus bought our peace with God
With his holy, precious blood;
Peace in him for sinners found
Is the Gospel's joyful sound.

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Ash Wednesday • Adam/Eve
Complete Script For Worship Leaders

- The opening litany features responses from Lamentations 1 and 3, and Psalm 51, and is interrupted by verses sung by the congregation to the tune Martyrdom CM:

**Alas! And did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For sinners such as I?**

- L** *Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.*
- C** **My transgressions are like a yoke about my neck, fastened by the hand of the Lord. They weigh so heavily upon me that my strength is gone.**
- P** When we lift our hands in prayer to God in heaven, we should offer him our hearts and say, “We have sinned! We have rebelled against you!”

**Was it for sins that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!**

- P** You are kind, God! Please have pity on me.
- C** **You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins. Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.**
- P** I know about my sins, and I cannot forget my terrible guilt.
- C** **You are really the one I have sinned against. I have disobeyed you and have done great wrong. So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me. I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.**
- P** But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom.
- C** **Wash me with hyssop until I am clean and whiter than snow. Let me be happy and joyful!**
- P** You crushed my bones,
- C** **now let them celebrate. Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt.**
- P** Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again. Don't chase me away from you or take your Holy Spirit from me.

**O Hope of ev'ry contrite soul,
 O Joy of all the meek,
 How kind you are to those who fall,
 How good to those who seek!**

- The Prayer Of The Day is offered by the pastor according to local liturgical tradition. Afterwards, this hymn verse is sung by the congregation to the tune Martyrdom CM:

**To God all glory, praise, and love
 Be now and ever giv'n
 By saints below and saints above,
 The Church in earth and heav'n.**

- This Homily is delivered by the pastor:
- P** Look at your hands. Amazing things, really. Ten digits, capable of working in harmony. And with those two opposable thumbs we carry at the ends of our arms two miracles of nature, capable of wielding a mighty hammer ... or a tiny tweezer. Able to construct a colossal bridge ... or the most delicate woman's wristwatch. Miracles of nature, indeed—marvelously engineered by our creating God. Look at your hands. Just look at them.

In his hands, in his very own hands, God scooped up a mound of clay from a river's edge and shaped it into his own image. There, on the banks of that river, God breathed his own breath ... his own Spirit ... into that dirt-man's lungs, and (*blowing*) whoosh, he became a living, breathing being.

I wonder what Adam saw when he looked at his hands.

After the incident with the fruit ... after his banishment from the garden and his fall away from God ... he almost certainly saw dirt in his hands. "Cursed is the ground because of you," God said that fateful day. "In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." Dirt, caked on his hands from digging in the dust, was what he saw. Trying desperately to eke out a living from the earth, when only thistle and bramble came forth from his labor, Adam was accustomed to digging in the dirt.

But the dirt lay deeper still. "Dust *you are*," God reminded Adam that day, "and to dust ... you shall return." Even if Adam could wash away the dirt from the fields, he would never get to the bottom of it.

Look at your hands and think about dirt. Because some day those hands of yours ... and these hands of mine ... along with everything else that is us, will yield again to the dust. We are born in Adam's image. We, too, are dust ... and to dust we shall return.

But I also wonder whether Adam didn't see more than just dust when he gazed into his hands. Because, you see, if God molded Adam from the clay, I think I know enough of sculpture to say with certainty that Adam must have been covered with God's fingerprints. And I wonder if, as a final act in putting Adam together, God didn't press his almighty hand into the hand of Adam. I wonder if Adam bore on his fingers the very fingerprints of God.

Because, if that is so, then hands with those same marks, now marked, as well, with prints from nails, would one day rise from the dust again. And those same hands would beckon Adam and Eve and all children of dust to rise as well. Good news will follow, children of dust. Good news, indeed. But for now ... consider ... dust.

- This hymn is sung by the congregation to the tune Mendon LM:

**“Yet even now,” thus says the Lord,
“Return to me with all your heart,
With fasting and with tears of grief;
Your hearts, and not your garments, part.”**

**Unto the Lord, your God, return,
Who sends his mercy from above;
For he is gracious, slow to wrath,
And he abounds in steadfast love.**

**The sinless Son of God was made,
For us, the One by sin defiled,
That we in him might righteous be
And with our Father reconciled.**

**Even as we return, O God,
Claiming your grace for Jesus’ sake,
Turn now to us with heartfelt love
And leave a blessing in your wake.**

- The Old Testament Lesson, Joel 2:12-19, read by a reader:

Ⓜ “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 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. 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? Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; 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. 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. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. The 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.

- This Responsory from Hebrews 12:2 is shared between a reader and the congregation:

L *Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.*

C **He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did.**

L *Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne.*

C **Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.**

- The New Testament Lesson, 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:2, is read by a reader:

R We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For 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.

- The Monolog (for Adam) is delivered:

If your worship includes The Old Rugged Cross, walk down the aisle carrying a broad shallow basket (probably lined with plastic) filled with black dirt. Potting soil would work very well. In the basket might also be a gardening tool such as a trowel ... and maybe also some fruit, like pears and/or apples. Place it at the foot of the cross.

R There are times when I dream ... when on the wings of gentle sleep sweet visions transport me back to those times

Oh, you cannot understand the enormity of my remorse, or the gravity of my guilt, because it is not possible for you to grasp what I ... what we ... lost.

Even now the memory of it fades. Even now the thoughts of Eden ... that heavenly garden ... slip away from me as the memory of a dream recedes with the morning, leaving only the empty shells of emotion in its wake.

There are times, of course, when I think of it as I labor—as I scratch and dig at this accursed ground, watering the dirt with my sweat—the furrows in the soil matching, line for line, the furrows of my brow. It is then that the regret is the strongest ... and the anger ... and the loss.

But it is in the dreams that I am whisked away, most completely, most innocently, to the way it was.

Oh, Eden, that glorious garden, planted by God, where birds never ceased in their morning song and flowers bloomed, uncoaxed, in magnificent, rainbow hues; where wolves frolicked with bobcats and lions snoozed with lambs. I made my bed, one time, upon the downy belly of a bear, lulled to sleep by his gentle, cavernous snoring.

It never rained there. Did you know that? The always-blue sky bore on its back the most pillowy of clouds. But never did it cloud over. Never was the sun completely hidden from our sight. Not that there was a lack of water. Oh, no! Springs gurgled with their icy issues, which tumbled over smooth stones and through grassy meadows. And that miraculous morning mist—it watered the ground and filled the air with such delightful, earthy aromas.

(Still dreamy) And the fruit ...

(With gravity) The fruit.

There's the rub.

Because it wasn't just the garden—the sights and sounds, the aromas and the flavors, the feeling and the peace.

It was Him. When we walked with Him in the deepening dusk, talking

over the events of the day. When we lay, together, in the afternoon sunshine. When we ate with Him, and drank, and shared. When He opened His magnificent mouth ... and began to sing. Oh, the music. You have no idea.

You could not believe how close He was.

You call it, I'm told, the Fall—what happened there in the garden, what happened with me and with my wife. The word is very descriptive—Fall—and accurate as well. For that is exactly how it feels. Because, you see, as much as I would like to blame someone else—that snake, my wife, even God (and I did all three that fateful day—“The *woman* ... which *you* gave to be with me ... she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate.”), as much as I would like to blame anybody else ... it was I who fell away.

I took that fruit ... I wrapped my hands around it ... and then my lips ... and then my teeth ... and I ate it. I disobeyed. I fell away.

It was not God who turned His back. No. In fact, He searched me out, running through the garden until He found me, hidden in my shame.

No one is to blame but me. It was by my hand ... by my own hand, wrapped around that wretched fruit, that I have received what I deserved.

I fell—fell out of the garden, away from the earth and the animals, away from my wife, away from immortality ... and away from Him.

Earth man, He called me. Dirt man ... Dusty. That's what Adam means. That's what his Hands can do. He formed me out of the dust of the ground—shaping, molding, gently caressing me, breathing His own breath into my lungs.

And when my hands go to work? “Remember you are dust—Adam—dust ... and to dust you shall return.” That is the result of my handiwork. By His hand ... life. By my hand ... death.

I know what love is. I know, firsthand, how powerful it is. And so I know, too, deep within, that He is still chasing me. He will continue to love me ... love me so strongly that it will hurt Him—terribly.

And so, as I stand here, laboring over this dirt, to which I will one day return, I look to the day that He promised would come—the day when He will come back for me.

And I wonder how much it will hurt Him. I wonder what the cost will be.

For, it was by my hand, clutching that fruit, hiding my face, weaving those clothes ... it was by my hand that all of this is necessary.

And it is for my sake that He will fight to win me back.

If your worship includes The Old Rugged Cross, at the end of the monolog, pick up a piece of fruit and contemplate it for a moment before putting it back. Then lift a handful of dirt and let it fall back into the basket, keeping some to rub between your thumb and fingers so that some remains there. Then lower your head as if thinking, and raise your hand as if scratching your forehead in thought. When your hand is removed, a smudge of dirt should remain on your forehead.

Following that action you may simply leave down the center aisle ... or, you might take the fruit from the basket and place it at the foot of the cross, and carry the basket (with dirt and tool) with you as you leave.

- Or the Monolog (for Eve) is delivered:

If your worship includes The Old Rugged Cross, walk down the aisle carrying a broad shallow basket (probably lined with plastic) filled with black dirt. Potting soil would work very well. In the basket might also be a gardening tool such as a trowel ... and maybe also some fruit, like pears and/or apples. Place it at the foot of the cross.

- Ⓜ There are times when I dream ... when on the wings of gentle sleep sweet visions transport me back to those times

Oh, you cannot understand the enormity of my remorse, or the gravity of my guilt, because it is not possible for you to grasp what I ... what we ... lost.

Even now the memory of it fades. Even now the thoughts of Eden ... that heavenly garden ... slip away from me as the memory of a dream recedes with the morning, leaving only the empty shells of emotion in its wake.

There are times, of course, when I think of it as I labor—as I scratch and dig at this accursed ground, watering the dirt with my sweat—the furrows in the soil matching, line for line, the furrows of my brow. Or, when in the throes of childbirth, when my body strains to bring those children into this world, when pain shooting through my limbs and head—it is then that the regret is the strongest ... and the anger ... and the loss.

But it is in the dreams that I am whisked away, most completely, most innocently, to the way it was.

Oh, Eden, that glorious garden, planted by God, where birds never ceased in their morning song and flowers bloomed, uncoaxed, in magnificent, rainbow hues; where wolves frolicked with bobcats and lions snoozed with lambs. I made my bed, one time, upon the downy belly of a bear, lulled to sleep by his gentle, cavernous snoring.

It never rained there. Did you know that? The always-blue sky bore on its back the most pillowy of clouds. But never did it cloud over. Never was the sun completely hidden from our sight. Not that there was a lack of water. Oh, no! Springs gurgled with their icy issues, which tumbled over smooth stones and through grassy meadows. And that miraculous morning mist—it watered the ground and filled the air with such delightful, earthy aromas.

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There's the rub.

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It was Him. When we walked with Him in the deepening dusk, talking over the events of the day. When we lay, together, in the afternoon sunshine. When we ate with Him, and drank, and shared. When He opened His magnificent mouth ... and began to sing. Oh, the music. You have no idea.

You could not believe how close He was.

You call it, I'm told, the Fall—what happened there in the garden, what happened with my husband and me. The word is very descriptive—Fall—and accurate as well. For that is exactly how it feels. Because, you see, as much as we would like to blame someone else—that snake, my husband, even God (and Adam did blame others that fateful day—“The *woman* ... which *you* gave to be with me ... she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate.”), as much as I would like to blame anybody else ... it was I who fell away.

I took that fruit ... I wrapped my hands around it ... and then my lips ... and then my teeth ... and I ate it. I disobeyed. I fell away.

It was not God who turned His back. No. In fact, He searched us out, running through the garden until He found us, hidden in our shame.

No one is to blame but me. It was by my hand ... by my own hand, wrapped around that wretched fruit, that I have received what I deserved.

I fell—fell out of the garden, away from the earth and the animals, away from my husband, away from immortality ... and away from Him.

Earth man, He called my husband. Dirt man ... Dusty. That's what Adam means. That's what His hands can do. He formed Adam out of the dust of the ground—shaping, molding, gently caressing Him, breathing His own breath into Adam's lungs. And he dug into His creation's side, and from a rib handcrafted me! When His hands go to work—miracles are the result!

And when my hands go to work? “Remember you are dust—Adam—dust ... and to dust you shall return.” That is the result of my handiwork. By His hand ... life. By my hand ... death.

I know what love is. I know, firsthand, how powerful it is. And so I know, too, deep within, that He is still chasing me. He will continue to love me ... love me so strongly that it will hurt him—terribly.

And so, as I stand here, laboring over this dirt, to which I will one day return, I look to the day that He promised would come—the day when He will come back for me.

And I wonder how much it will hurt Him. I wonder what the cost will be.

For, it was by my hand, clutching that fruit, hiding my face, weaving those clothes ... it was by my hand that all of this is necessary.

And it is for my sake that He will fight to win me back.

If your worship includes The Old Rugged Cross, at the end of the monolog, pick up a piece of fruit and contemplate it for a moment before putting it back. Then lift a handful of dirt and let it fall back into the basket, keeping some to rub between your thumb and fingers so that some remains there. Then lower your head as if thinking, and raise your hand as if scratching your forehead in thought. When your hand is removed, a smudge of dirt should remain on your forehead.

Following that action you may simply leave down the center aisle ... or, you might take the fruit from the basket and place it at the foot of the cross, and carry the basket (with dirt and tool) with you as you leave.

- This Hymn is sung by the congregation to the tune *Herzlich Tut Mich Verlangen* 76 76 D:

**Remember, earth-born mortal,
The dust from which you came,
And know that life's last portal
Returns you to the same!
Let ashes tell the story,
From dust its lesson learn:
Beyond life's fleeting glory
To dust you shall return!**

- Here, if desired, The Distribution Of Ashes may take place according to local custom, after which the Hymn continues:

**O God, you once did fashion
Our lives from earth's frail dust.
Through Jesus' Cross and Passion
Help us your grace to trust.
For Christ was born of Mary
Our mortal dust to share,
Our sin and guilt to carry,
Our ransom to prepare.**

**Let ashes be the token
Of heartfelt penitence
And of your promise spoken
To raise our bodies hence.
Have mercy on us mortals!
Let faith within us burn,
That even from death's portals
We may to life return!**

- These Prayers are offered by the pastor:

P For our sakes, O loving God, your Son shared our humanity, flesh of our flesh, dust of our dust.

For our sakes, O loving God, our sinless Savior took our sin upon himself, its guilt and punishment.

For our sakes, he resisted all that might have tempted him to turn aside from your holy will, to violate your Word.

For our sakes, he took up the cross, and gave his life upon it.

For his sake, O God, stretch out *your* loving hand to fill *our* hands with *his* fullness. Loosen our grasp on the things of this world and free our wills from covetousness. Give us the strength and determination to resist temp-

tation, to turn anew to you and the mercy you offer, to take up the cross and follow faithfully, relying on your firmly guiding hand.

For we are dust, and unto dust we shall return. And yet we do so with firm confidence in your creating, saving power. For in your hands, dust lives!

Breathe into us the breath of life, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

- The Offering is gathered as this Verse is sung by the congregation to the tune *Gethsemane 77 77 77*:

**Chief of sinners though I be,
Jesus shed his blood for me,
Died that I might live on high,
Lives that I might never die.
As the branch is to the vine,
I am his, and he is mine.**

- The Lord's Prayer is offered according to local custom.
- This or another Benediction is delivered by the pastor:

P *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.*

C **Amen.**

- This Verse is sung by the congregation to the tune *Gethsemane 77 77 77*:

**Peace, to soothe our bitter woes,
God in Christ on us bestows;
Jesus bought our peace with God
With his holy, precious blood;
Peace in him for sinners found
Is the Gospel's joyful sound.**