**St. David’s Episcopal Church**

Bean Blossom, Indiana

Ash Wednesday

March 2, 2022

**Sermon by the Rev. Kate Wilson**

### Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 103:8-14 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:102 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-2143a

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1Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. 2Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments ….

### 3b“Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. 4Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.

### Bust-ed!

###  Our readings this evening have two clear concerns, hypocrisy vs right action, and the brevity of our lives. Lent is the season during which we can give up chocolate or drinking or we can make conscious choices to eliminate the stumbling blocks between us and God, between us and our family members, between us and communities where we engage with others. We have the luxury of reflecting on embracing God’s will for us. And what is that? To be at peace in the assurance of God’s love for us because we love God and we love our neighbors as ourselves. We reflect during Lent on how to best do God’s will, so clearly set forth by Jesus in our Human Owner’s Manuals, the Sermons on the Mount and Plain, and our brief reading from Matthew this evening.

### I believe that the epitaph on my tombstone will read, “Catherine A. Wilson: She meant well.” I mean well, but I am fully human and unable to bat 1000 in the diamond field of life. It is good to have and to take the time to reflect on where I am, to honestly assess my stumbling blocks, and to work out moving them or ending them. That I can do. That we can do. And here is the season to do it.

### How do we get in our own ways? What fears cause our shortsightedness or limit our freedom to breathe in the assurance of God’s love?

### Shortly before my sister died three years ago, a former partner of mine was dying. Her younger daughter was by her side. But her older daughter had no idea that she was ill. Why? Because she and her mom had written each other off. I don’t know the cause. I do know that her mom did not call her to tell her of her advancing illness, nor did her sister call her before or after her death. In the end, I emailed the older daughter of her death. There was no response except, “Maybe someday I’ll tell you why.”

### This heartbreaking rupture goes on in families every day. What a difference reconciliation could have made. What a difference in the free flowing of love among people who honestly acknowledged their actions and their errors, changed their behaviors, and healed. Their reality is heartbreaking. Our reading of Isaiah makes manifest the God of forgiveness and love for those who make the changes they must to reinstate that flow, one so freely offered.

### I had my left hip replaced in November. This is my third joint replacement. My hearing has become an issue. I have felt betrayed by my body. COVID has been a good excuse to isolate from other people. But God calls us to take our parts in community. Somehow, someway. Thank heavens for the fifth evangelist, St. Zoom of all Nations. But as our doors open again, I am meditating on how I am called to go through them. I don’t know the answers yet, but I know I am not called to isolation and blaming myself for the assemblage of dust called my body. I need to reconcile this issue for a more joyful life, even if it means I will never play professional volleyball. I never have, by the way.

### We pray – as we should – for the people of Ukraine and for the aggressors surrounding them. We can do little more except to support relief efforts. And that is frustrating. But it is more frustrating to have routes to resolving our own turmoils and not to make use of them. We have a hidden jewel in the Episcopal Church. The Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### Forgiveness vs reconciliation – what’s the difference between these? I see forgiveness applying to our suffering from the past, acceptance to our suffering of the present, and reconciliation as the gateway to having futures of joy and health and love. None is easy to address or evaporates into air at the snap of a finger, but we have possibilities with all three. I have found it so freeing to open up to another trusted person about my stumbling blocks. Some folks say, “I left the Catholic Church because of things like confession!” I understand. But sometimes I need for God to have skin on, just as I do, so that I can let things go and have someone I trust who knows how I plan to be accountable for change. We can talk to find ways that work best for you.

### Some of us will take part in a six-session series on cleaning out what needs to be cleaned out. All are invited! I will be making the Sacrament of Reconciliation available throughout Lent and particularly on Holy Saturday, all by appointment. Anything I hear from others within the Sacrament is sealed forever among the reconciler, me, and God. Period. I invite you to a new freedom, and to receive the blessing based on the second letter to the Corinthians we heard this morning:

### The God of reconciliation bless you.

### The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you.

### And the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen you this day and ever more.

### Thanks be to God. Amen.