



## Lent Video Script 2023

At the corner of Bear Creek and Castlegate streets in Memphis there is a stop sign, and in some ways this seems a little ironic. This corner is the location where the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols took place. The video and other images of that scene have been observed all around the world. Shocking and disturbing images that no words could ever justify or excuse. How could this ever happen are the words that come to me. Despite the preaching of Jesus and many others, we have seen scenes too similar to this far too often.

The image that I have in my mind, and maybe you have seen it too, is a photo that was taken many hours after the violence took place. It is a photo of that intersection, at night, where just the glow of the streetlights reveal the scene. With this dim light you see where those two streets come together and now where some flowers and a balloon have been placed there. Placed there to fill the space with compassion, and love and grief and prayer. They were placed at the base of the stop sign. That stop sign, for me, signals so many things. Stop the brutality. Stop the racism. Stop the power and control. Stop the hatred. Stop letting the darkness take over. Stop all that is getting in the way of hearing a gentle voice that is saying some simple words: "Create in me a clean heart O God."

They come from Psalm number 51 which plays a prominent role in the liturgy of Ash Wednesday in our preparations for Lent and then into Holy Week. Create in me a clean heart, O God.

When you think on those words what do they mean for you? How does one move toward a cleansing of the heart? A few things came to mind for me.

Repentance is key. Many of us might want to steer away from that word. It sounds too negative. But repentance refers to turning away from something or turning toward something. It is a change of heart. A realization that we human beings are called to more than simply putting in our days on this planet. We are called to a depth of relationship with God our Creator and with our neighbours and ourselves. We are called to receiving forgiveness for where we have veered off a path of justice and compassion, where we have broken our vows or our promises, where we have fallen short in love of God. We are called to receive forgiveness for this and much more but also to be one who forgives as well. To be one who is able to forgive our own selves for past wrongs but also to be able to forgive others of past wrongs as well. Create in me a clean heart O God.

But creating a clean heart also speaks about a prayer life that links our living, our concerns, our celebrations, our fears, our despair with our relationship with God. A prayer life that brings us closer to the realm of God. A prayer life where we open ourselves more fully to God's grace and gentleness. A prayer life that invites in stillness, a deep stillness where God is known and felt. A deep stillness that pushes aside the noise and commotion of life to listen to what is most important: Create in me a clean heart O God.

Creating a clean heart examines the spiritual food that we consume each day. Where are we nourished? Where are we fed? Where do we discover that we are not alone? The bread and wine of the Eucharist feed our spiritual hunger and thirst. The elements of the sacrament nourish us in ways that no other food will. They speak into our deepest fears, anxiety and understandings of our existence. Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Creating a clean heart helps us question so many things that take place in this world. We question why we resort to war seemingly so easily. Why is reconciliation such a difficult concept for us to live into? Why are we more worried about profitability rather than compassion for others? Why do there continue to be mass shootings? How do we offer a fuller compassion and help to the people affected by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria? Why are we willing to ignore the rampant drug overdoses or homelessness or murdered and missing women? Why are we willing to accept injustices as long as they do not affect us? How can we live out what it is that we believe about God? Create in me a clean heart O God.

That shocking scene at the corner of Bear Creek and Castlegate, that stop sign that stands there, speaks to many things in this world that are

needing to change. That scene speaks to the extent that we can fall short of God's hope for us. That there are so many pieces that need healing and hope and the peace of God. This Lent I urge you to prayerfully consider how God is calling you to live in this world. How these forty days impact your faith and hope in God. How they cause you to look at this world differently. Take some time in repentance, in prayer, in spiritually feeding yourself, in questioning how you live out God's hope for you.

Create in me a clean heart, O God.