**Today Your Mercy Calls Us - LSB 915 - Ash Wednesday Sermon**

Four-year-old Tony is caked in mud. Roughly five minutes before,

he walked out the front door with his father and sister, ready for church.

His little sister tripped and skinned her hand.

Dad went inside to tend to her, asking Tony to sit at the picnic table.

Tony did as he was told until he noticed the inviting dirt pile

at the edge of the garden, recently soaked by several inches of rain.

Tony didn’t intend to get messy, but by the time he reached the dirt pile,

his shoes had sunk in the soft soil.

When he reached down to steady himself, both hands ended up in the muck.

Mud splashed on his face. Tony made matters worse by wiping his face

with his filthy hand and then wiping that hand on his nice Sunday clothes.

That’s when he heard, “Tony, come here.” Tony didn’t want to go to his father.

A day earlier, Dad warned him not to go near the mud.

Tony wished he had obeyed. Tony was sorry,

but he knew he deserved to be punished. His father, however,

took a damp cloth, washed Tony clean, and provided a clean outfit.

Tony thought, “I’m sure glad I came to Dad when he called.”

**Exploring the Hymn - Background**

“Today Your Mercy Calls Us,” was written by Oswald Allen (1816–78)

Who suffered from spinal problems. He also understood another affliction — sin.

Allen’s original text used singular rather than plural pronouns:

“Today Thy mercy calls ME / To wash away MY sin; / However great MY trespass,

This hymn was deeply personal. Now that it is often sung in congregations,

it uses the collective pronouns of US and WE.

Let’s looks at this hymn. It’s more of a communion hymn, than a Lenten hymn, but I thought this would be a good one as we are receiving the Lord’s Supper today.

**1 TODAY Your mercy calls us**

The original title of this hymn was just the one word “TODAY”

That word is used in almost every verse. This reminds me of:

***2 Corinthians 6:2 - Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***

**To wash away our sin.**

***1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

**However great our trespass,**

How would you respond if someone said “God could never forgive what I’ve done?

***Luke 7:47-48 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”***

***Romans 5: 20 But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,***

***Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?***

**Whatever we have been, however long from mercy our hearts have turned away**

**Your precious blood can wash us And make us clean today.**

***Isaiah 1:18 “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.***

***Matthew 26:28 - For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.***

**2 Today Your gate is open, And all who enter in**

**Shall find a Father's welcome And pardon for their sin.**

***Luke 15:20-24 - “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.***

**The PAST shall be forgotten, A PRESENT joy be giv'n,**

**A FUTURE grace be promised, A glorious crown in heav'n.**

I love the way he writes about the past, present & future.

Rev 2:10 also speaks about our current suffering, but also our future glory

***Revelations 2:10 - Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, & for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death & I will give you the crown of life***

**3 Today our Father calls us; The Holy Spirit waits;**

**His blessed angels gather Around the heav'nly gates.**

What a picture of our heavenly home. It’s like a family reunion…the good kind. ☺

***Luke 15:7 - I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over 1 sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent***

**No question will be asked us How often we have come;**

**Although we oft have wandered, It is our Father's home.**

Just like in the story of the Prodigal Son, the father says to the 2nd son

***Luke 15:31-32 - “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”***

**4 O all-embracing Mercy, O ever-open Door,**

**What should we do without You When heart and eye run o'er?**

When do your eyes overflow with tears.

***John 16:23 - "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."***

**When all things seem against us, To drive us to despair,**

What troubles “drive us to despair”? When that happens…

**We know one gate is open, One ear will hear our prayer.**

***Psalm 34:15 - The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,***

***and his ears are attentive to their cry;***