

## *Listening to the Message*

*Listen to the message from God's Word. Use this sheet to make some personal notes. Go back over them during the coming week and let God crystallize God's truths in your life.*

**Date:** Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023

**Message by:** Pastor Roscoe D. Cooper, Jr.

**Sermon Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Bible Text:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Main ideas of the message:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrations I want to remember:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**What should I do as a result of hearing the message?**

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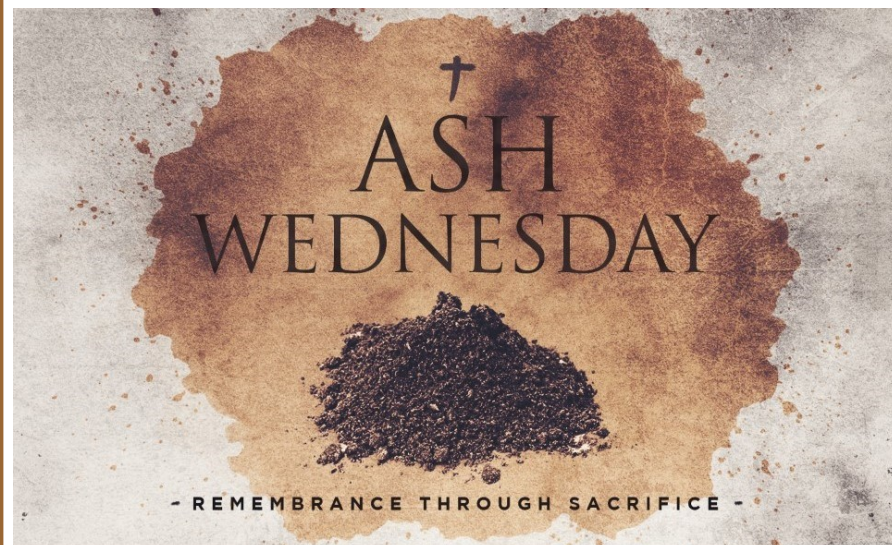
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*God is real, God is good,  
God is faithful. If you serve God, God will bless you!!!!*



**Wednesday, February 22, 2023**  
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*From Ashes to the Cross:  
An Invitation to a Holy Lent*

At the heart of the Christian faith is our relationship with Jesus Christ. We proclaim Jesus' life, ministry suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. Through Jesus Christ, God saves us from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from slavery to freedom, and from oppression to liberation. God in Jesus Christ brings life in deathly situations, hope in despairing situations, and opportunity in desperate situations.

Lent is a time for us to participate in the life, ministry, suffering, and death of Jesus and to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, which is Easter.\* Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the forty weekdays of preparation for Easter. Ash Wednesday calls for us to return to the Lord. We recall our mortality and wait upon the Lord to renew us. This is a time for putting aside our sins and failures in light of who we are yet to become by the grace of God through Jesus suffering on the cross.

Traditionally, the church has observed Lent as a time of penitence, fasting and prayers. This season of forty days provided a time in which converts were prepared for baptism into the body of Christ. It was also a time when persons who had committed sins and had been separated from the community were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness and restored to the fellowship of the church. Thus, these acts—preparation of persons for baptism and restoration of persons—reminded the church of its work of forgiveness.

As a mark of our mortality and as a need for the grace of God through Jesus Christ, let us go forth, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to observe Lent by meditating on God's word, examining ourselves, fasting, almsgiving, and praying.

\* Sundays are not a part of the forty days of Lent. They are in Lent but not of Lent. Every Sunday of the year is considered to be a "little Easter", a celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, Easter is a day of the week, a day of the year, and a season of the church year.

# Season of Lent

## Lectionary Readings

### **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

March 26, 2023

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalms 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

### **Liturgy of Palms**

April 2, 2023

Psalms 118:1-2,19-29

Matthew 21:1-11

### **Liturgy of the Passion**

Sixth Sunday of Lent

April 2, 2023

Isaiah 50:49a

Psalms 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 26:14-27:66 or

Matthew 27:11-54

# Season of Lent

## Lectionary Readings

**Ash Wednesday**  
February 22, 2023

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or  
Isaiah 58:1-12  
Psalm 51:1-17  
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**First Sunday in Lent**  
February 26, 2023

Genesis 2:15-17;3-17  
Psalms 32  
Romans 5:12-19  
Matthew 4:1-11

**Second Sunday in Lent**  
March 5, 2023

Genesis 12:14a  
Psalm 121  
Romans 4:1-5,13-17  
John 3:1-17 or  
Matthew 17:1-9

**Third Sunday in Lent**  
March 12, 2023

Exodus 17:1-7  
Psalm 95  
Romans 5:1-11  
John 4:5-42

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
March 19, 2023

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Psalm 23  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

**Annunciation of the Lord**  
March 25, 2023

Isaiah 7:10-14  
Psalm 45 or  
Psalm 40:5-10  
Hebrews 10:4-10  
Luke 1:26-38

## The Season of Lent

Jesus and John the Baptist each spent time fasting (going without eating) in the desert before entering into ministry.

Fasting is one way Christians prepare to serve God. The season of Lent is a time of preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, when pastors mark the foreheads of Christians with ashes as a reminder that all Christians are created from dust and to dust they shall return.

Lent follows Jesus from his adult ministry through his suffering during Holy Week to his crucifixion and death on Good Friday. The Psalms foretold what would happen during that week.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, also called the Sunday of the Passion, and continues through Holy Thursday (when Holy Communion was instituted at the Last Supper) and Good Friday, when Jesus was tried, crucified, and buried.

Because the Last Supper was celebrated during the Feast of the Passover, which is calculated on the phases of the moon, Easter is called a movable feast. Lent is scheduled backward from Easter. Easter falls on the first Sunday after the full moon after the spring equinox. The forty days of fasting and penitence during Lent do not include Sundays. Christians always celebrate Sunday as the day Jesus rose from the dead, so it is never a day of fasting.

Many Northern Europeans celebrate the day before Ash Wednesday, ***mardi gras*** (French for *Fat Tuesday*, also called *Shrove Tuesday*), by eating up everything good in the house that medieval Christians believed was inappropriate to eat during Lent (eggs, milk, butter, cream, meat). This celebration has expanded into all sorts of festivals all over the world.

Most modern Christians do eat some - or all - of those foods during Lent, following a modified fast.

Lent is a time of stripping down to essentials, as each Christian focuses on his or her individual relationship with God. No one asks another person to do without or to suffer during Lent - the sacrificial observance is private and personal. No Christian uses Lent as an excuse for self-righteousness. The focus of Lent is to study more deeply, to pray more sincerely, and to show greater kindness.

During Lent Christians remember their baptisms, when Jesus washed away all sins, giving newness of life to celebrate the triumph of Palm Sunday and the glory of Easter. Many early Christians were baptized on Easter Sunday, so Lent became a special time of study and prayer in preparation for their baptisms. Later entire congregations joined in the study and prayer as they looked forward to the anniversaries of their baptisms on Easter.

Because Lent is a time of letting go of the bondage of sin, it is also a time of celebrating the freedom from the bondage of slavery. At the Feast of the Passover, all Jews give thanks for their freedom from the captivity of the Egyptians.

They remember Moses, their leader, when they perform Out of Egypt.

And Christians give thanks for the freedom of all slaves in every culture everywhere when they sing Go Down, Moses (*With One Voice* 670).

"Grains of Wheat (Una Espiga)" from the *Libro De Liturgia Y Cantico*, published by Augsburg Fortress, is a good communion hymn to teach to children to learn how Jesus brought the sacrament of Holy Communion into everyone's lives.

The color of Lent is purple.

***Have mercy on us, Lord.***

*We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.*

***Have mercy on us, Lord.***

*We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives.*

***We confess to you, Lord.***

*Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,*

***We confess to you Lord.***

*Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,*

***We confess to you, Lord.***

*Or intemperate love of worldly good and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,*

***We confess to you, Lord.***

*Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,*

***We confess in you Lord.***

*Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done; for the blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,*

***Accept our repentance, Lord.***

*For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,*

***Accept our repentance, Lord.***

*For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,*

***Accept our repentance, Lord.***

*Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us; Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great. Accomplish in us the work of your salvation, **That we may show forth your glory in the world.***

***Benediction***

*Pastor: Receive the gifts of Lenten devotion, disciplines that are crucial for faith: "give, almsgiving, pray, fast.*

*Let us pray.*

*Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Response Hymn ..... "Give Me a Clean Heart"

Reading of the Word

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalm 103:8-14

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

Matthew 6:16, 16-21

Musical Offering..... "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

### ***Message***

Pastor Cooper

### ***Invitation to Discipleship***

Unison Prayer of Confession.....Psalm 51

### ***Presentation of Financial Offering***

### ***Impositions of Ashes***

### ***Litany of Penitence***

*Most holy and merciful Father. We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.*

## ***Biblical Significance of Ashes***

Ashes were used in ancient times to express grief see (2 Samuel 13:19f) The gesture was used to express sorrow for sins and faults ( Job 42:3-6). The Prophet Jeremiah calls for repentance by saying ...gird on sackcloth , roll in the ashes (Jeremiah 6:26)

Lent is the 40 weekday period before Easter. It is an allusion to the separation of Jesus in the desert to fast and pray. During this time he was tempted. (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13a, and Luke 4:1-13. While not specifically instituted in the Bible text, the 40-day period of repentance is also analogous to the 40 days during which Moses repented and fasted in response to the making of the golden calf (Exodus 34:27-28). (Jews today follow a 40- day period of repenting in preparation for the High Holy Days from Rosh Chodesh to Yom Kippur.

Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.



**\* Sundays are not included in Lent. Sundays are feast days celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. \***

*Ash Wednesday each year sets before us the gifts of Lenten devotion, disciplines that are crucial for faith: "give alms ... pray ... fast."*

## **Ash Wednesday**

Ash Wednesday is a Christian day for peace and the first day of Lent, which is six weeks of repentance before Easter. It derives its name from the placing of repentance ashes on the foreheads of participants to either the words "Repent, and believe the Gospel" or the dictum "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return, based on the words spoken to Adam and Eve after their sin. These words remind us of our sinfulness and mortality, and implicitly of our need to repent in time.

The ashes used are those of palm branches blessed at the previous year's Palm Sunday service. The ashes are mixed with holy water or olive oil as a fixative

Where the ashes are placed on the head by smudging the forehead with a sign of the cross, many Christians choose to keep the mark visible through the day as a public profession of faith

*Wednesday, February 22, 2023  
Ash Wednesday Service  
7:30 p.m.*

## **Greetings and Call to Worship**

**Pastor:** *Good Evening. Welcome to Ash Wednesday Worship. The Lord is with you.*

**P.** *And with you also.*

**All:** *The Lord is With us all indeed.*

**Pastor:** *We gather together tonight to face up to and acknowledge that we are sinful creatures.*

**P:** ***We acknowledge that humans were created by God in God's image in a state of holiness, with freedom of choice. By their freedom of choice, humans sinned against God and brought sin into the world. As a result of human action, the entire creation is positively inclined to sin.***

**Pastor:** *We gather tonight to face up to and acknowledge our mortality.*

**P:** ***We are because of human sin under just condemnation to eternal destruction. The wages of sin is death( Romans 6:23) From dust we have come and to dust we shall return.***

**Pastor:** *The night marks the beginning of Lent, the forty days preceding Easter. During Lent, we are called to engage in worship and study that focus our attention on the horror created because of human sin and the hope and joy created by God's gracious acts in history and especially in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

**P:** *During Lent, we will practice acts of contrition and the disciplines that allow us to embrace and live out God's gift of salvation given to us through Jesus Christ.*