

GOSPEL MESSAGE

March 5, 2025

ASH WEDNESDAY

A Celebration of Mortality

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” These words will be spoken in congregations and communities around the world today as Christians gather to remember our collective mortality with a smudge of ashes on our foreheads. Facing the reality of death can feel grim, and to go as far as to celebrate our mortality can feel countercultural in every way. Yet, perhaps it is in remembering our mortality, our frailty, and our limits that we find true freedom.

On Ash Wednesday, we are set free from our striving to be God. We are set free from the expectation that we are somehow superhuman. We can lay down the false hope that achievement, fame, wealth, popularity, or being “good enough” can save us from our inevitable end. We are freed from our endless attempts to convince ourselves or others that we are right or perfect or holy or that we have it all together. Instead, we get to exhale as we remember that we are nothing but human. We are creatures of the dust, and despite our striving, our convincing, our appearance-making, despite every attempt at maximizing our time or our money or climbing whatever ladder we are trying to climb . . . we are dust, and to dust we shall return.

Ash Wednesday invites us to take our rightful place with the rest of creation. After all, God is God, and we are not. And yet, God sees our dusty human selves and calls us “good” (Genesis 1:27, 31). Christ enters into our very human, very mortal lives and makes us holy, giving us the gift of abundant and eternal life. We have already been made new. We have already been declared good. We have all we need, and now we are freed to simply live.

But first, we remember the dust. And we remember the One who formed us from the dust and who will meet us when we return to dust at the end.

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March 5, 2025

Our Savior Lutheran Church

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Pastor Chad Rademacher

The Mission of Our Savior: That all may *know* Christ, *grow* in Christ and joyfully *go* with Christ.



INTRODUCTION

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.

PRELUDE

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREETING

PRAYER OF THE DAY

FIRST READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-17

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

REFLECTION

The Dust and the Cross
Pr. Chad Rademacher

HYMN OF THE DAY

Be Thou My Vision
(ELW 793)

INVITATION TO LENT

CONFESSION OF SIN

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*Those who desire to receive ashes come forward.
The ministers apply ashes to the forehead of each person with the words:
Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

OFFERING

Jesus Calls Us –tune: Galilee/Lani Smith arr.
Connie Webber

OFFERING PRAYER

GREAT THANKSGIVING

PREFACE

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER & LORD’S PRAYER

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

BLESSING & PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

PARTING BLESSING

CLOSING HYMN

Bless Now, O God, the Journey
(ELW 326) vs. 1,3

DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE

