

ASH WEDNESDAY & LENT

Mid Week Instruction
Reid Temple AME Church
Pastor Washington - Presenter

ASH WEDNESDAY

- ◉ Ash Wednesday we remember that we are dust. It is a day to remember the bad news of who we are apart from Jesus Christ.
- ◉ Ash Wednesday is a Christian holiday or holy day that is not required in scripture.
- ◉ Ash Wednesday is the day set apart by Christians to initiate the 40 day season of preparation for Holy week.

WHY ASHES ON THE FOREHEAD?

- ⦿ Ashes remind us of our mortality. We say the words from Ecclesiastes, “ From dust thou art to dust thou shall return.”
- ⦿ Ashes are placed in the shape of the cross that suggest the good news that is yet to come.
- ⦿ Putting ashes on the forehead tells people in so many words you are going to die.
- ⦿ The ashes also remind people why they need Jesus and to experience God’s grace.

THE DENIAL OF DEATH

- ⦿ The denial of death is all around us.
- ⦿ When people die they are often alone, sequestered in the hospitals.
- ⦿ If someone dies at home the corpse is quickly sent away from the grieving relatives.
- ⦿ In polite society one doesn't talk much about death, when referring to death we use nifty euphemisms to keep us from confronting the fact.

FEAR OF OWNING OUR DEATH

- ⦿ We don't want to think about our mortality.
- ⦿ We do things to pretend that death is not approaching.
- ⦿ We dye our graying hair, we cover up age spots, we get cosmetic surgery.
- ⦿ Ash Wednesday is a day we stare death in the face and say from dust thou art to dust thou shall return and here are ashes in case you have forgotten.

DEATH AND THE ASSURANCE OF LIFE

- ◉ Ash Wednesday is a ritual that gives us freedom to think about death and the assurance of real life, eternal life.
- ◉ When we know our lives are safely in the hands of God and this physical life is just the beginning of eternity we are free to be honest about what lies ahead for us.
- ◉ We can face death without fear or pretending because we know who defeated death.

ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION

- ⦿ The result of Ash Wednesday isn't depression or gloom but gratitude and new energy for living.
- ⦿ Ash Wednesday is a time to realize how desperately we need God.
- ⦿ Ash Wednesday is a time to recognize life doesn't go on forever, so we find new passion to delight in the gifts of each and every day and to take none of them for granted.

ASH WEDNESDAY AND REPENTANCE

- ◉ In early days Christians who had fallen into persistent sin had ashes sprinkled on their bodies as a sign of repentance.
- ◉ Job repented in dust and ashes. Job 42:6.
- ◉ Around 10th century all believers began to signify their need for repentance by having ashes placed on their foreheads in the shape of the cross.
- ◉ The sign of sinfulness pointed to the good news yet to come through the shape of the cross.

LENT DISCIPLINES

- ⦿ There are some basic disciplines that can be applied each day during lent.
- ⦿ You should read a chapter of the gospels each day. Before you begin ask the Lord to speak to you through His word.
- ⦿ Read slowly and prayerfully. Let the text sink into your mind and spirit and heart.
- ⦿ After reading pray about what has touched you.

LENT IS OUR SEASON OF PREPARATION

- ⦿ Lent is a time for training our hearts for a deeper relationship with God.
- ⦿ Lent is a time to prepare our spirits for the big event of Calvary and Pentecost.
- ⦿ The season of lent is often a time to participate in a fast of some kind.
- ⦿ The point of the fast isn't deprivation as much as dedication of oneself to God.

LENT: GIVING UP VS. ADDING TO

- ⦿ Many Christians ask what are you giving up for Lent.
- ⦿ The issue is not what your are giving up as much as what are you adding to.
- ⦿ We should add something that will help us draw more directly to the Lord.
- ⦿ What about committing to a bible study at church. Or Giving something to the homeless.

LENTEN CHALLENGE

- ◉ Give up something in lent that allows you to make a tangible sacrifice to the Lord.
- ◉ What ever you give up on a daily basis, allow it to remind you of your commitment to God.
- ◉ Make your desire for God first in your life.
- ◉ Give up something you usually enjoy and yearn for and learn that it is really optional.
- ◉ Lent raises our awareness of how much we depend on other things in life than the Lord.

RELEASE THE IDOLS

- ⦿ Lent should show us how easy it is to allow little idols to be set up in our lives.
- ⦿ Lent should help us to surrender those little idols to God.
- ⦿ Lent raises our awareness as a person or the feeling for what we hunger for in life.
- ⦿ Once we have given up the thing we are eager for in life we should learn to celebrate what we no longer take for granted.

LESSON SUMMARY

- ⦿ Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are dust.
- ⦿ Ashes on our forehead reminds us of our mortality and the good news yet to come.
- ⦿ In polite society one doesn't talk about death we use nifty euphemisms to avoid facing facts.
- ⦿ Ash Wednesday is a time to realize how desperately we need God.
- ⦿ Lent is a time for training our hearts for a deeper relationship with God.

