TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#869 Come We That Love the Lord
#851 I'll Fly Away

Scripture Reading by: Braylen Butler
#383 Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross

Communion Devotional by: Bobby Rader
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#881 Mansions Over the Hilltop
Sermon: "Shepherd the Flock"
1 Peter 5:1-5

#911 Bring Christ Your Broken Heart
#957 This World Is Not My Home
Closing Prayer by: David Smith

No small group meeting today.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Mar. 2, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

A Journey With Jesus

If you look on your calendar, you will note that this coming Wednesday is designated as "Ash Wednesday." I recall sitting at the house 3 or 4 years ago now around this time of year, and Abbey realizing that day, prompting her to ask, "What is Ash Wednesday?" Perhaps some of you have wondered that very same thing; I remember, for instance, being puzzled as a kid why people would walk around with dirt on their faces. And some of you have, on a more serious note, asked questions about this in the past; we have even written about it in this space.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent. Of course, that is something else that many of us are likely unfamiliar with; we do not participate in it—it is not practiced in Scripture—and I would not argue that we should. But we might not know its connection to Lent; we might not know much about Lent, for that matter. When did these practices emerge and why?

Broadly speaking, in Scripture, ashes were associated with humility and remorse, as well as fasting and even mortality. If you had sinned and felt regret over that sin and were repenting, you would sometimes sprinkle ashes on your head as a sign of sorrow and penitence. Ashes were supposed to remind you that you were mortal, Eventually you become ashes after you die: *ashes to ashes, dust to dust,* as the funeral service in the Book of Common Prayer puts it, adapting language of Scripture. We are probably aware of some of these references: *God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes* **(Job 30:19)**; *I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes* (**Gen 18:27)**; *You are dust, and to dust you shall return* **(Gen 3:19).**

We can probably think of many times we see ashes associated with repentance, especially in conjunction with sackcloth. Everyone in Ninevah, from the king down, responded to Jonah's preaching with repentance, fasting, and sackcloth and ashes **(Jonah 3:5-7).** Job says that he *repents in dust and ashes* at the conclusion of the book (**Job 42:6).** More generally, as Job also demonstrates, ashes are also a sign of grief under misfortune, of self-abhorrence. Thus, Job goes to the ash heap outside the city; Tamar puts ashes on her head and tears her robe; Mordecai puts on sackcloth and ashes when learning of Haman's plot. Accordingly, the early Christian writer Tertulian records using ashes as a sign of repentance as early as the 3rd century.

So how did this practice come to be joined with one particular day? During the 7th or 8th century, the church incorporated this into their practice of Lent. With that said, now we need to back up and learn a bit more about Lent. Lent is the 40 day fast that takes place before Easter—40 weekdays, to be more precise. In the earliest days of the church, every Sunday was a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus. But due to its importance and the fact that, unlike many events in Jesus' life, the time could actually be located accurately on the calendar, the annual observance of it was

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Staci Lunceford Copeland has been placed on hospice.

James Scott has been in the hospital.

Jo Ella McKewen has been in the hospital.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn, George Votaw

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Deacons, Minister meeting Monday, Mar. 3rd at 6:30 p.m.

We will have a Blood Drive on Monday, Mar.3rd from 4-7:30 p.m. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Mar. 4th at 8:00 a.m.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

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something that occurred very early. Easter was accordingly the first Christian holiday to be observed beginning in the 2nd/3rd century

In these first 3 centuries, a period of fasting was observed in preparation, typically of 2-3 days. Over time, this grew to a 40 day period, first mentioned in the Canons of Nicaea (325). This was suggested by the 40 days fasts of Moses, Elijah, and especially of Jesus himself. The term, "Lent," is from Old English and simply denotes the "spring season," since it took up most of it.

Like many things—the date of Easter, for instance, which is too long a story to get into here—this was reckoned differently in the East and West. In the East, the Lenten Fast was observed during 7 weeks, but since Saturday and Sunday were exempt, there were only 36 actual fast days. In the West, the fast was over 6 weeks, but also for 36 days, as they counted Saturday. The full 40 was not made up until the 7th century when the four days from Ash Wednesday to the 1st Sunday in Lent were added. This both made the proper number—now actually 40 instead of just approximate—and gave the start greater significance. Privately, people sprinkled ashes on themselves as a sign of repentance, as they had been doing for centuries. Eventually, this became a pubic practice. At one time, public penitents in Rome began their penance on this day; when this fell into disuse in late 1st millennium, the general penance of the whole congregation took its place. This was symbolized by the ashes on the head, now rubbed onto the forehead in the shape of a cross. The ashes eventually were taken from palm branches from Palm Sunday, burned the year before.

Obviously, none of this is rooted in Scripture or the practice of the earliest Christians. But I do think it is worth pondering the concept of Lent as a reflection of the 40 day fast of Jesus. Right after his baptism, Jesus went out into the desert to fast and to be tempted by the Devil. For Jesus, those 40 days were a time of introspection, a time when he battled the temptations of Satan and emerged stronger than before. This was preparation for his ministry that he was to embark on.

The idea of Lent is to make that journey with Christ, to think about one's own temptations, sins, and repentance. It is easy to simply dismiss this practice as something unauthorized by the Bible and not give it any more thought. But I would argue that the underlying principal is a good one—so important, in fact, that it should not be focused on for a mere 40 days every year.

We ought always to evaluate ourselves in light of God's Word; to abandon the sins we have perhaps let casually take hold in our life; to renew our desire to serve God; to be the people God intends us to be.

Bryant Perkins