

**Homily**  
**Community United Methodist Church of Coeur d'Alene**  
**Ash Wednesday**  
**February 18, 2026**  
**Noon & 6:30 PM**

Texts: Matthew 5:1-12, Psalm 51

Theme: Bless the Lives We Actually Have: Blessed Are the Fragile

[prayer]

I have a #blessed coffee mug that was given to me as a gift. On the front is a dictionary definition of the word “blessing”:

*Noun. A favor or gift bestowed by God, that brings happiness, prosperity and peace. A prayer asking for God’s wisdom, compassion and protection. A collection of all things that we love and give us joy. Prayers answered through the grace of God.*

Seems like a pretty comprehensive definition. But I still find myself taking some exception with it. At its core, this definition of blessing revolves around possessing things: Happiness, prosperity, peace, wisdom, compassion, protection, love, joy. These are all good things that come to us by God’s grace, so this definition of blessing isn’t wrong. But it is incomplete. Because biblical blessing isn’t primarily about what we possess. Biblical blessing is about who we *are*.

Even when we don’t have happiness, prosperity, and peace, we are still blessed. We are blessed because we belong to God. God has claimed us as His own. From the dust of the earth God made us and breathed into our lungs the breath of life. How fleeting our lives are, how fragile our bodies – and yet God has given us His sacred breath. How impossibly loved we are by our Creator to be given this honor! Every inhale and exhale serves to remind us that we belong to God.

The root of the Hebrew word for blessing, *berakah*, means “to kneel” (*barak*). It implies our humility, our lowness, our closeness to the ground as human beings. God condescends, stoops low from heaven, to bless us. God is the Creator and we are God’s creatures. Where God is immortal, we are mortal. Where God is

immutable, unchangeable, we are always changing. Where God is indestructible, we are fragile. We are plagued by our humanity.

Our culture likes to pretend that is manifestly not the case. Kate Bowler writes, “We live in a culture that tells us we are #blessed when we are independent, perfectable, and have it all together. But on Ash Wednesday, we practice the opposite. Today, we proclaim that blessed are the fragile. Humans in their very nature are dependent and imperfect with broken bodies and sometimes broken spirits. We might have made more mistakes than we care to count (or have anyone remember). We might be weighed down by utter despair for ourselves or someone we love. Ash Wednesday should offer us all a sigh of relief. For today, we practice counter-cultural truth-telling when we lay down our illusions of durability at the altar. And we are reminded of what we are made of—from dust, to dust—as the reality is smeared across our forehead.”<sup>1</sup>

What are we really asking for when we ask for God to bless us?

Fundamentally we are asking God to acknowledge our weakness. We are asking God to acknowledge our need, our dependence. It takes a lot of courage and vulnerability to admit that, to admit that we are helpless, to trust God with our brokenness. That is the invitation of Ash Wednesday. And when we admit our need, our dependence, our fragility, God stoops low and offers us grace. God offers us His steadfast love and compassion. God declares our blessedness is rooted in our belovedness and nothing else. And God gives us a Savior who does not despise our frailty, but assumes it and redeems it.

Let us pray:

God, today our finitude  
is rubbed on our foreheads.  
The reality of our limits, our fragile bodies,  
spoken over us like a curse:  
from dust we are made  
to dust we will return.

Some days we need to be reminded

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Bowler. “Bless the Lent We Actually Have – Sermon Guide.” Copyright 2022. [katebowler.com](http://katebowler.com).

that we are not the perfectibility projects  
we set out to be.  
We are full of bounce and  
brimming with hope.  
All woes, solvable.  
All problems, a distant whisper.

When we don't feel like dust,  
Bless us, oh God,  
in the ways we trick ourselves into believing,  
that our lives are something we've made,  
that all our accomplishments and  
successes and mastered mornings  
add up to something independent of you.

But on days like today,  
when our heads hang low  
Sunk with the grief of our neediness,  
Bless us, oh God.

When our joints don't work like they should,  
when we grow sick or turn gray too soon.  
when our bodies betray us...  
or perhaps they are doing exactly what  
they are supposed to do.

Tell us again  
exactly how you made us:  
from dust to dust.

Blessed are we, a mess of contradictions,  
in our delusions and deep hopes,  
in our fragility and finitude.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "A Blessing for Ash Wednesday" Adapted for a communal setting from *The Lives We Actually Have*, page 200.