

Ash Wednesday 03/05/25 – 7:00 PM – PMC

Sermon Title: “Repent and Believe the Gospel!” *Psalm 51:1-17, 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*

(Slides 1-11 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

Brothers and sisters, welcome again on this our first day of this forty-day season of Lent. For the next forty-days, minus Sundays, we will be journey together on the “road to redemption” with Jesus towards his cross on Good Friday. This season of Lent will then end, and we will then celebrate Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday. Tonight though, we begin this holy season of our faith on this Ash Wednesday. On this day, Christians have for many centuries gathered to pray, to turn to God, and to receive ashes. These ashes were often the ashes that were burnt from Palms on the Palm Sunday the year before, or some other form of ashes. As Jesus entered the Holy City of Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday of that first Holy Week, we know that it ended with the cross on Good Friday. The palms of Palm Sunday, which was a day of celebration are now gone, and Christ will die for our sins soon on Good Friday.

Our opening slide tonight, therefore, is a bowl of burnt palm ashes, with one palm folded into a cross, as many people fold their palms into crosses on Palm Sunday.

Slide 1 – (“Ash Wednesday: Repent and Believe the Gospel!” – Cover Slide)



Today brothers and sisters, is the first day of our annual journey with Jesus Christ to his cross. This is why this Sunday I am starting a Lent sermon series called “The Road to Redemption,” as we will journey to cross of Christ together.

Tonight, we also heard scripture readings from Psalm 51:1-17 and 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10, and both of these scriptures call us to turn to God in love and repentance. To acknowledge where we fall short, and to help us to be more like Jesus Christ our Lord. Even if we suffer for Christ, we when come to him in love and repentance He can use us in a variety of ways to bring others closer to Him.

Our main preaching scripture on this Ash Wednesday is from the gospel of Matthew 6:1-6, and 6:16-21. I invite you to open your bibles or your bible apps to the gospel of Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. This is what we hear in Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21:

Slide 2 – (“Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV # 1”)

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV – Pastor Paul

Concerning Almsgiving

6 ‘Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. **2** ‘So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

Slide 3 – (“Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV # 2”)

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV – Pastor Paul

3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Slide 4 – (“Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV # 3”)

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV – Pastor Paul

Concerning Prayer

5 ‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. **6** But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Slide 5 – (“Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV # 4”)

**Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV – Pastor Paul
Concerning Fasting**

**¹⁶ ‘And whenever you fast, do not look
dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure
their faces so as to show others that they are
fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received
their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on
your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that
your fasting may be seen not by others but
by your Father who is in secret; and your
Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

Slide 6 – (“Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV # 5”)

**Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, NRSV – Pastor Paul
Concerning Treasures**

**¹⁹ ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures
on earth, where moth and rust consume
and where thieves break in and
steal; ²⁰ but store up for yourselves
treasures in heaven, where neither moth
nor rust consumes and where thieves do
not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your
treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

In our gospel reading from Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, we hear tonight from Jesus Christ our Lord how to live and how to not live out our faith. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:1 to not practice our piety or reverence in Christ in front of others. Let us not be pious and reverent, just so others can see it. Let us not give to God our treasures and others who need it, just to be recognized by others, as we hear in Matthew 6:2-4. Do what we do for Christ and Christ alone, for He is the source of

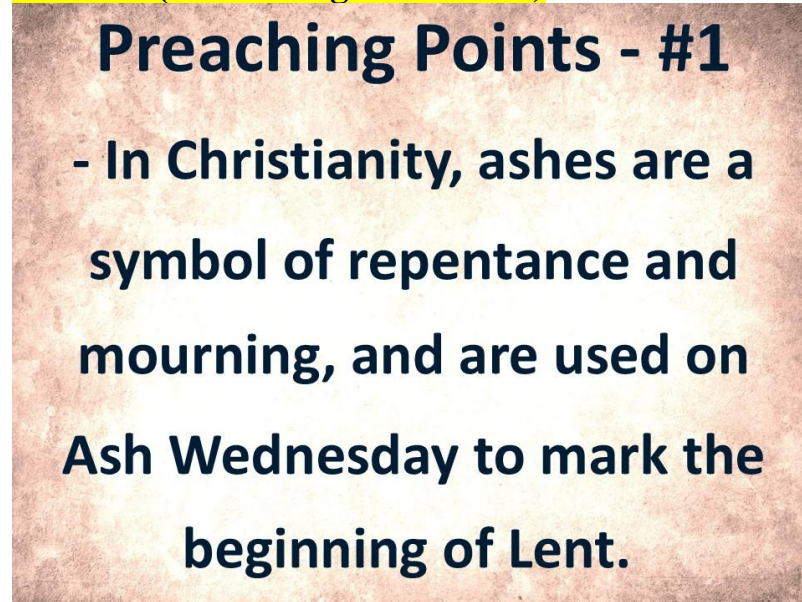
our hope and our salvation. Jesus also tells us not pray so just others can here it, but to pray in secret and in our prayer closet. Our prayers are not supposed to be given to receive prayers from others, but to connect with God and to pray for others.

In Matthew 6:16-21 Jesus tells us about fasting from eating, as we can also fast from other things, as well. Let us not fast or refrain just to win praise and respect from others, but when we fast, let us put oil on our heads and wash our faces. May our fasting not be seen by others, but only by God who will reward us. Jesus also tells us to not store up treasures for ourselves in earth, as things on earth get eaten by moths and rust away and stolen. May we store up treasure in heaven that will not be eaten by moth, will not rust, and will not be stolen by thieves. Jesus tells us if our treasure is in heaven, this is better than treasures on earth, as where our treasure is, there our heart will be too.

Ash Wednesday's brothers and sisters, this first day of Lent is day and a season to remind us that we need Jesus. Our ashes tonight are a reminder that we all fall short, and through Jesus Christ we are made whole and offered salvation through Him. Given all of this, I want to explain a little bit more where this tradition of Ash Wednesday came from, and why we have it. This tradition is not required of us by scripture, but it is in scripture, or scriptural. Here are some

preaching points to explain why we have this service, and this tradition called Ash Wednesday.

Slide 7 – (“Preaching Points # 1”)



Historically, sometimes ashes were sprinkled on people’s heads or other methods of the imposition of ashes were used. In this country we often impose ashes in the shape of a cross on our foreheads. In fact, some Christians have been using ashes on this day since the 1,000’s. So, the ashes we will receive tonight are just a symbol. They themselves have no power, but they are a symbol of our repentance and our mourning, as we all need Christ. We all sin and fall short, but Jesus forgives us if we but turn to Him. When we leave here tonight there, our ashes show us and the world, that we are followers of Christ, and that we long to be like Jesus, who is our Lord and our Savior.

Wearing ashes, or using ashes is also, as I said, very scriptural, as we see in our second preaching points slides:

Slide 8 – (“Preaching Points # 2”)

Preaching Points - #2

Biblical references:

- In the Old Testament, people would sit in ashes, sprinkle them on their heads, or eat and drink with them.
- In the New Testament, ashes are mentioned as a sign of repentance for sins.
- In Job 42:6, Job says, "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes".

Ashes are a sign of our mortality and our need for God. We are people that love Jesus, and long to be more like him. Our ashes show us and the world this. Here are more meaning of the ashes that we will receive tonight in our “Preaching Points # 3 slide:

Slide 9 – (“Preaching Points # 3”)

Preaching Points - #3

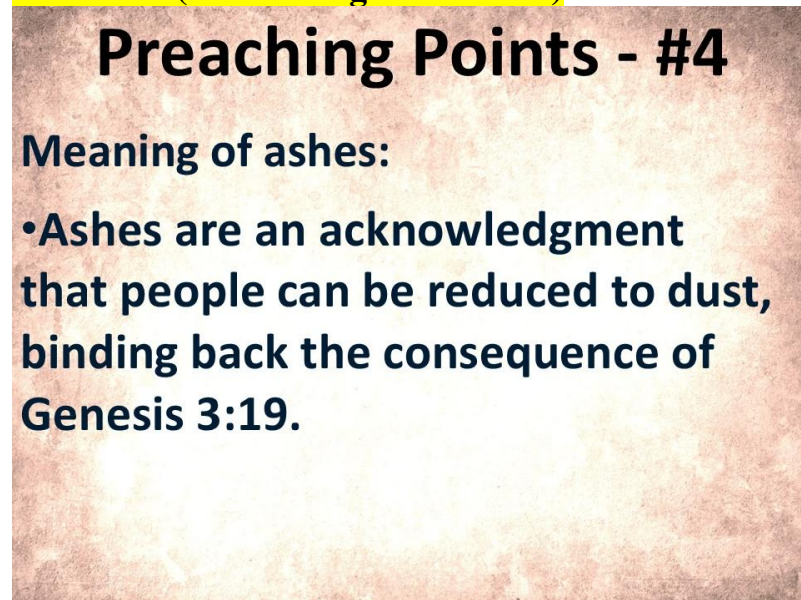
Meaning of ashes:

- Ashes represent death and repentance.
- Ashes symbolize regrets, repentance, and the need for reconciliation.
- Ashes are an outward expression of a need to begin again.

The ashes that we receive tonight, as we just heard, represent death and repentance. Our ashes also symbolize our regrets, our repentance of our sin, and the need we all have to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. As we heard, ashes are also an outward expression of our need to spiritually begin anew with Jesus.

Sometimes when we have received ashes, or have received ashes on Ash Wednesday, the pastor or priest may have said "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" when we received our ashes. Another historical expression spoken when someone receives ashes though, is "Repent and Believe the Gospel!" This reminds us to return to Jesus, on this night, and every night. As far as the idea of receiving ashes and dust, this is our fourth preaching point slide:

Slide 10 – ("Preaching Points # 4")



Preaching Points - #4

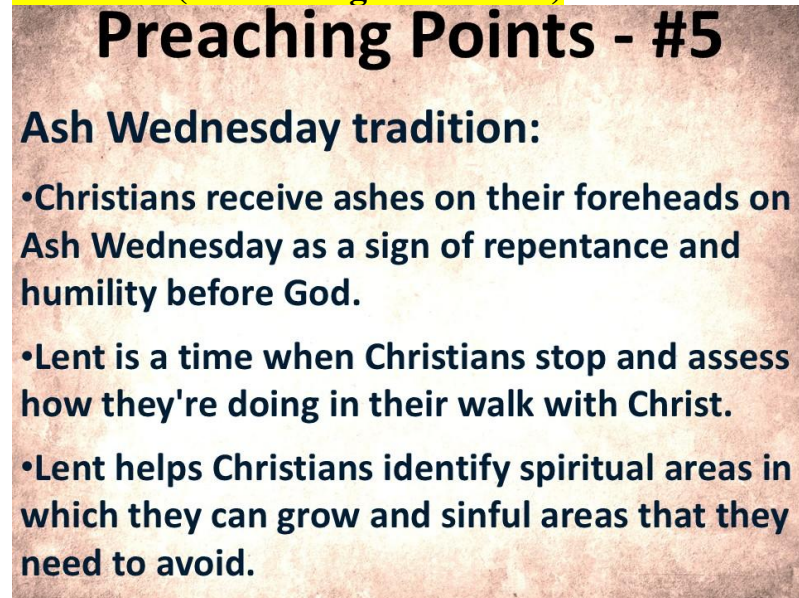
Meaning of ashes:

- Ashes are an acknowledgment that people can be reduced to dust, binding back the consequence of Genesis 3:19.

It is true to say that these physical bodies that we have in this life are like dust in the end, but our lives with Christ are eternal and never ending.

Here is a final preaching points slide on what Ash Wednesday is, and why we will receive ashes on this night:

Slide 11 – (“Preaching Points # 5”)



Preaching Points - #5

Ash Wednesday tradition:

- Christians receive ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday as a sign of repentance and humility before God.
- Lent is a time when Christians stop and assess how they're doing in their walk with Christ.
- Lent helps Christians identify spiritual areas in which they can grow and sinful areas that they need to avoid.

The ashes we will receive tonight are in part a sign of our repentance, and our humility before God. We are not to hate ourselves, but to see where we have fallen short. Where can we be more like Christ? What sin and brokenness is still in our lives? How is our walk with Christ? How is our faith and love for others, as this season of Lent is designed to bring us all to the cross of Christ. What are the areas in this holy season where we need to surrender to God and be more like Christ?

In just a moment, I will invite us all to enter in our annual observance of the Lenten season discipline, so that we may grow closer to Christ and to each other. May our ashes tonight be more than a symbol, but a reminder of our need for and

to be like Jesus Christ. Brother and sisters happy Ash Wednesday, and happy Lent.
Amen.