

Ash Wednesday - A Blessed Path To Restoration

Feb 22, 2023

The Sanctification of the Church Series

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-14

The Blessed Path to Restoration

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5, James 5:16, Lamentations 3:37-42, Lamentations 3:55-58

Lamentation 3:37-42; 55-58 NLT “Who can command things to happen without the Lord’s permission? Does not the Most High send both calamity and good? Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins?

Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the LORD.

Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven and say, “We have sinned and rebelled, and you have not forgiven us.....But I called on your name, Lord, from deep within the pit.

56 You heard me when I cried, “Listen to my pleading! Hear my cry for help!”

57 Yes, you came when I called; you told me, “Do not fear.”

58 Lord, you have come to my defense; you have redeemed my life.”

Introduction: As you begin your Lenten journey, I pray that God would pour out his Holy Spirit upon you, empowering you to take up your cross and follow Jesus. I pray that both the strength and the boldness of Jesus would be yours so that as others look at you, they see a disciple of Jesus, following not at a distance, but His side.

Does anyone know how Lent got started? It's not in the Bible.

There is no verse that says "Thou shalt celebrate Lent." Around 230 AD, a group of Christians started fasting for the 40 hours leading up to Easter to prepare their hearts for Easter.

Pretty soon, the idea caught on. Years later, they bumped it up to 7 days of fasting. And they called it Holy Week.

And by 325 AD, the church officially made it 40 days, representing Jesus' 40 days of testing in the wilderness. That is the reader's digest version of the tradition of Lent.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, the day when the ashes from the burned palms, from last Palm Sunday, is used to place a mark of the cross on our foreheads. As it says in the Bible, from dust we came and to dust we shall return.

Lent is the period of the liturgical year leading up to Easter. The traditional purpose of Lent is preparation through prayer, repentance, charity and self-denial for the annual commemoration during Holy Week of the suffering and death of Jesus, ending with Easter Sunday and the celebration of the His resurrection.

LENT

Traditionally, Lent is forty days long, starting with Ash Wednesday and ending with the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as preparation for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days.

It doesn't take too much reading of the Bible to see that 'forty' is a magic number, not only for Christians but also for a lot of other faiths:

- Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai when God gave him the Ten Commandments**

- **The great flood lasted forty days**
- **Moses and the Hebrew people wandered for forty years in the desert after leaving Egypt.**
- **Jesus lay in the tomb for forty hours before His resurrection**
- **The forty days of Lent also represent the time that Jesus spent in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry. During those forty days he faced temptation and doubt, purified Himself for His upcoming ministry.**

It is a tradition that the season of Lent be celebrated by fasting, both from food and parties, prayer, and also a time for reflecting on our lives in preparation for the resurrection of Jesus.

In earlier times, days of fasting were established, when only one meal a day could be eaten with no meat or dairy. And Fridays were specified as non-meat (I can remember as a child that Friday was fish and macaroni and cheese day). These dietary restrictions have been, for the most part lifted. In place of these are suggested donations to charity and doing social justice work.

There are many churches that do not recognize the Lenten Season, primarily because it is seen as a distinctly Roman Catholic commemoration. Over time, quite a few churches have adopted the Lenten observances.

Ash Wednesday offers an opportunity for restoration, restitution, renovation, renewal, and revival.

Our lesson to night is from the book of Lamentations which is a collection of 5 hymns written by the Prophet Jeremiah capturing the predicament of a godly nation fallen from grace. Jeremiah is very emotional as he records this great national catastrophe that overtook the Jews in general and the capital city, Jerusalem, in particular. After the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem in 587 BC, Jeremiah records the sufferings and the anxieties of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the cruelty experienced by the king and his nobles, priests and prophets at the hands of Babylon and their own guilt and shame.

La 3:37 “Who can command things to happen without the Lord’s permission? Does not the Most High send both calamity and good? Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins?”

The Sanctification of The Church Series

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-14

Summary: The church is to be a holy place, filled with holy people, fulfilling a holy task. Paul’s words on the church should be an inspiration to all.

PLACE OF THE CHURCH (v.1,2)

- LOCATION of the building (not important)**
- DEDICATION of the believer (what God looks at)**

PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH (v.3-5)

- Commended for their faith**
- commended for their love**
- commended for their hope**

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH (v.5b-8)

- SHARE THE GOSPEL**

PLAN OF THE CHURCH (v.9-12)

- must be FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE**
- must WALK WORTHY OF THE CALLING**
- must be STRENGTHENED**

PROMISE TO THE CHURCH (v.13,14)

- we have been DELIVERED**

-we have been REDEEMED

-we have been FORGIVEN