

Ash Wednesday

By: Rev. James Yang

Ezekial 18:30-32

I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.³¹ Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel?³² For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, forty-seven days before Easter. The ashes placed upon our heads come from an ancient practice of repentance—a visible reminder of our mortality and our need for God’s mercy.

But repentance is more than words spoken or sins confessed. True repentance reaches deeper than our lips; it calls for a turning of the heart and a reorientation of our lives toward God.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke these words to Israel while they were exiled in Babylon—a people who had turned from the Lord to idols and false gods. Their rebellion led them into violence, corruption, and moral decay. Yet even then, God did not abandon them. Instead, He called them to turn back and live.

We may ask, *how can we rid ourselves of sin?* The truth is, we cannot cleanse ourselves by our own strength. Sin cannot simply be covered over or ignored—it must be dealt with. Just as dirt must be washed away and disease destroyed, sin requires more than good intentions.

When we wrong someone, an apology is required—an outward expression of inward remorse. But Ash Wednesday reminds us that our sin before God runs deeper than any apology can repair. Only God can erase our past, remove our guilt, and restore what is broken.

If repentance is to be real, it must lead to transformation. And transformation requires intervention. This is why we call upon the Holy Spirit—to create in us a new heart and a new spirit, to cleanse us from the inside out, and to shape us into the likeness of Christ.

As we begin this Lenten journey, we once again place ourselves before God—body, mind, and spirit—choosing to die to ourselves so that Christ may live in us. As the apostle Paul reminds us:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”— Galatians 2:20

A Prayer for Today:

Dear Lord,

We submit to You this day all that is stored in our minds and hearts from the past, present, and even into the future. For only You know the depths of our brokenness, sin, and depravity. Your grace and love for us abound more deeply than we could ever know, even within ourselves. You know how to heal, and only You have the power to restore.

So we set our minds and hearts on You, O Lord. May You be ever present, transforming us into Your likeness each day. In Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.