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Lutheran Church of Our Savior

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## FROM THE PASTOR...

**Lent is the season of the cross.** So maybe we should stop and think about this cross-centered faith we hold. A cross-shaped faith is foolishness to the world. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God..." The cross is our supreme sign of how God gets what God wants. The cross is God's love letter to humanity; written in red. The cross says our salvation is in God's hands, not ours; our relationship to God is based on something God suffers and doesn't depend on something we do. We cannot climb up to God so he climbs up a cross to come down to us. The cross says the real God... the God who is... is the embodiment of suffering love...we are lost without God and the world hates it. But the cross is not only a window letting us see into God's heart, it is also a mirror in which we see ourselves. Seeing the cross is seeing our sin.

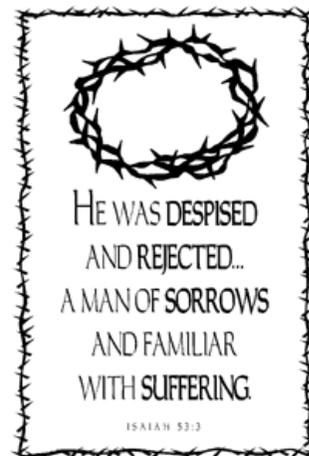
Ash Wednesday we say: "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." Christians all over the world have a cross marked on their foreheads in ashes. Ashes have always been a sign of repentance. Ashes are burned. They are spent. They are black and gray, charred and useless. Ashes are universal – all things, when put into a fire with enough heat, will turn to ashes. Ashes remind us all things are temporary in our world, including us. A certainty in life is we will all one day become ashes and our lives will be spent. Death, sinfulness, repentance... these are the things ashes symbolize for us. The only promise the world holds out to us is "ashes to ashes and dust to dust." The only promise the world gives is, "remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." But Jesus gives a different promise: "you shall be with me in paradise."

It is a Friday in Spring somewhere around 30 AD. Jesus and the two were crucified around 9am and Jesus died around 3pm. Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return. The soldiers, the crowd of religious leaders, even both thieves on his right and left ... all mocked Jesus. The Greek word used is blasphemo, "to demean through speech," but can also mean to "speak irreverently, impiously,

disrespectfully of or about ... God." You could almost hear them sneer: "Life is pretty tough on Messiahs these days, eh? How about a little miracle, Galilean? Some king of the Jews you are." I understand this coming from the soldiers and religious leaders standing at the foot of Jesus' cross; but not from one hanging next to Jesus? Crucified men taunting a crucified man? The reason this is happening is not only because they are wicked, but also that the scripture may be fulfilled:

"He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
Like one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised,  
and we esteemed him not." (Isaiah 53:3)

Maybe it was watching Jesus die or hearing Jesus forgive his enemies; or maybe it was the realization of his own death... but something changed in one of the thieves. He stops mocking Jesus. He defends Jesus: "We are getting what we deserve but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he looks at Jesus and makes an amazing plea. He didn't know much theology, but he does know Jesus is a King, a King with a kingdom to bring the most unworthy of citizens into it. In truth, he confesses his faith in Jesus as the Messiah—the Christ—the Anointed one of God. Jesus, I know I am dust and to dust I shall soon return, but Lord remember me in your kingdom. "Jesus." Jesus means "God saves." He didn't ask Jesus to remember his works or to remember he defended Jesus there at the end. He doesn't even ask Jesus to get him off the cross. He asked Jesus to remember him. Not like, "I kind of remember this guy who was next to me on the cross once." This is the cry of a heart broken by sin. This is the prayer of one who can see only dust but lifts his eyes to God and pleads for grace and mercy and forgiveness: "Save me from the judgment of God. Save me from



what I deserve. Forgive me, You've prayed for your Father to forgive. Can I be an answer to Your prayer?"

In answer, Jesus gives this faithful thief a promise: "You will be with me in Paradise. You will be with me. You ask just to be remembered, as though I will give you a passing thought, but you will be more than just a passing thought. In fact, when I sit on my sapphire throne, you will sit right next to me!" Jesus says "in Paradise." This word is a "Persian word meaning a walled garden. When a Persian king wanted to give someone a very special honor, he made him a companion of the garden which meant he was chosen to walk in the garden with the king. It was more than immortality Jesus promised the penitent thief. He promised him the honored place of a companion of the garden in the courts of heaven.

And so, the mark of the cross on the forehead: "Remember you are dust..." The only promise of a world without God: and to dust you will return. Remember you are dust... Life is fleeting. Time is short. *And* the ashes say we are fallen, and we can't get up on our own. We need God's help. The cross says God's love reaches us through our sinfulness--reaches us even through the shadow of death-- to the dust and the ashes of human life. We may be dust, but dust that we are, we are loved. We have nothing, and yet by God's love we have it all. Nothing in this world, even death, can separate you from God's love in Jesus. That is the secret scratched in ashes and hidden in an old rugged cross. We need God's forgiveness and we need God's grace. We need God's love. We need the cross, this divine love letter from God to us, written in red. ✿

## OPERATION SHOE BOX

**Here's something to consider!** As a team, purchases can be made in bulk with much savings. Therefore, if any member would prefer to donate financially to Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes, place your check made payable to: *LCOS* or cash donation in the offering plate with a notation "Shoeboxes." These funds will be used to make early purchases to help fill the shoeboxes at the packing party, tentatively scheduled in October. Any questions, please contact Anita Lange (805-937-6459) or Kathy Lee (530-263-0479). ✿



Mar 02	Jeremy Riley
Mar 04	Stephanie Clavin, Carter Schofield
Mar 08	Ruth Oliver, Stefanie Vargas
Mar 10	Pastor Stephen Eckert
Mar 11	Eric Martin
Mar 12	Mark Hathaway
Mar 15	Lisa DiModica, Charles Willcox
Mar 16	Melissa Crawford
Mar 22	Alba Glasser, Aiden Ibarra
Mar 25	Noel Rowe
Mar 26	Heidi Summers
Mar 27	Paul Mattson
Mar 30	Kathleen Barraza, Phyllis Legg, Mark Wilcox

**Note: There are no wedding anniversaries in March.**



Mar	03	8:15 am	Comm. Svc.
Mar	03	9:30 am	SS/Bible Study
Mar	03	10:45 am	Comm. Svc.
Mar	07	7:00 pm	Elders' Mtg.
<b>Mar</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2:00 am</b>	<b>DAYLIGHT SAVING BEGINS</b>
Mar	10	8:15 am	Worship Svc.
Mar	10	8:30 am	SS/Bible Study
Mar	10	10:45 am	Worship Svc.
Mar	11	6:00 – 8:00 pm	Men's Club
<b>Mar</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>March Ministry Schedule Due</b>
Mar	17	8:15 am	Praise Svc./Comm.
Mar	17	9:30 am	SS/Bible Study
Mar	17	10:45 am	Praise Svc./Comm.
Mar	19	9:30 am	Tabitha Quilting in Have Hall
<b>Mar</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>March Newsletter Deadline</b>
Mar	21	7:00 pm	Council Mtg.
Mar	24	8:15 am	Worship Svc.
Mar	24	9:30 am	SS/Bible Study
Mar	24	10:45 am	Worship Svc.
Mar	31	8:15 am	Worship Svc.
Mar	31	9:30 am	SS/Bible Study
Mar	31	10:45 am	Worship Svc.



**AT 2:00 AM  
MARCH 10, 2019**

## ELDER'S CORNER

### Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust



***"Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live." John 14:19***

I am getting older (surprise, surprise!) and soon it will be Ash Wednesday again! "Isn't it amazing how fast time seems to fly?" Oh, help me, I am becoming my mother and repeating her quaint phrases...and I swore I never would. I cannot tell you how many times she has said that very thing. Nevertheless, I say that because it seems like just yesterday, we were celebrating Advent and Christmas and now in just a few weeks we will be joining together for what I believe to be one of the least favorite days of the church year...Ash Wednesday!

I know that sounds strange coming from one of your elders but it's true. Ash Wednesday is **hard!** On Ash Wednesday we will gather together and at the specified time we will all come forward and have ashes placed upon our foreheads and the words, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return..." (Gen 3:19) are spoken over each one of us!

Perhaps more so than any other day in the church year, on Ash Wednesday, I know that I'm going to be made aware of my sin. Don't get me wrong; I am always aware that I sin, but in day to day life, it's easy to push it aside. It's easy to make excuses, "I slipped up." "I'm just tired." "I'll try harder next time." "I could be worse." "Come on...it's not *that* big a deal." Well, maybe it is a big deal because, come Ash Wednesday, Pastor Eckert will stand over each one of us as an ambassador for Christ and say, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The phrase is repeated again and again, and again and again, and again and again...hammering the message home till it echoes in our ears and minds...as each one of us steps forward in our humility. Old and young; men, women, and children; yes, even children! Why? Because we all are sinners. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Death awaits all. Death awaits me. For the wages of sin is death and I am a sinner! I know that more than anyone else. Even those closest to me do not know the depth of the wickedness in my heart. But I do...and so does God.

"For you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The words are indeed hard to hear and they do indeed make us uncomfortable...because they are true. But that is not all that is true, thank God. You see, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) That *is* the truth...that *is* the

reality...which the ashes and darkness of our sins cannot cover!

Indeed, the wages of our sin is death. The ashes of that ominous Wednesday (the definition of ominous implies a threatening character but not necessarily a disastrous outcome) remind us of that quite clearly. However, that is precisely the time that our Lord Jesus Christ steps in and reminds us of who we are and what we have in Him, for He says to us, not only on Ash Wednesday, but every day, "*Because I live, you also will live!*" (John 14:19)

Therefore, rejoice in the coming days of Ash Wednesday and Lent as they help to prepare and remind us that death does not have the final answer. The tomb is empty He is not here, *He is risen! He is risen indeed!* Alleluia and AMEN. ✨

Humbly submitted by your sinner...but *forgiven* elder...

...Dennis Payne

## ASH WEDNESDAY – MARCH 6



*Lenten Services - 7:00 PM.*

**(Preceded by a Soup Supper at 6:00 PM)**

**Mar 6 (Ash Wed.)**

**Mar 27**

**Mar 13**

**Apr 3**

**Mar 20**

**Mar 10**



### MOWING IN MARCH

**Mar 02 – Ernie Heuchert, Corey Maddison, Harold Oliver**

**Mar 16 – Bill Williamson, Arlin Weiting**

**Mar 30 -- Reese Riddiough, Keith Almond, Nathan Schofield**

### MARCH SUNDAYS

**Mar 03 – Christian Education Board**

**Mar 10 – Crystal Shaffer**

**Mar 17 – Wobrock Family**

**Mar 24 – Foley Brothers**

**Mar 31 – Anita Lange**



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### Bible Quiz



In John 9, Jesus' disciples ask whether a certain man or his parents sinned, causing his disability. Jesus says, "Neither. ... [It was] so that God's works might be revealed in him." What was this man's disability?

- A. Deafness
- B. Lameness
- C. Blindness
- D. Epilepsy

Answer: C (See John 9:1-7.)

### Our Mission

"Responding to God's love, Lutheran Church of Our Savior desires to reach more people for Christ by proclaiming Him, by growing in faith, and by caring for all people."



**Sunday Worship – 8:15 AM & 10:45 AM**  
**Sunday School & Bible Class – 9:30 AM**

*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that  
whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*  
John 3:16