

BSLC NEWS

February 2018

UNDERSTANDING ASH WEDNESDAY

Once again, this year, on Ash Wednesday (February 14), we will offer to those who attend the worship service the opportunity to have ashes imposed upon their foreheads. The reason for this ancient rite is to highlight two things.

First, that we are mortal and that God's judgment against our sin is just.

Adam and Eve were warned that the consequence of eating the forbidden fruit would be death; and since all of us are heirs of the sinful human nature that our first parents brought about, all of us, like them, are rightly considered guilty and deserving of punishment. Because of sin, our bodies will one day succumb to death and our souls are threatened with eternal condemnation.

Second, that we repent.

The ashes declare that we publicly acknowledge our sins and wish to turn away from them.

In our modern world many have difficulty with this concept. The idea of sin and guilt is being replaced with a mindset that says every person decides what's right for himself. Truth is considered to be a relative term and is no longer based upon the will of God as expressed in His Word. There is no sin, per se.

The ashes declare that we take a different view. We humble ourselves before God and recognize that we need His help. We admit that we have turned away from His perfect will and need some intervention from Him in order to be free of our guilt.

The ashes are made in the sign of the cross.

The ashes formed into the shape of the cross declare that He who carried all the guilt of our sin

upon His own body and suffered its consequences on our behalf is the One who saved us. His willingness to "become sin" for us is what enables our freedom.



The sign of the cross is that which is placed upon us at our baptism. At the font we were connected to Christ Jesus and offered the "washing of regeneration." On Ash Wednesday, the black ash cross engraves the mark of God's great love on our foreheads for all to see.

The ashes bear silent witness to our faith.

Jesus is our Deliverer and we are thankful that He sacrificed Himself for us to cleanse and redeem us. We want the world to know—our relatives, friends, and neighbors—that Jesus' love is greater than anything else. And so, while the ash cross declares our own imperfection to the world, it also glorifies Him who loved us enough to endure that awful crucifixion so that we could be His.

I would invite you, this Lent, to bring your burdens, sins, and pains to the cross. Join us on Sundays beginning on February 18 and continuing through Palm Sunday, March 25. Please also consider joining us for midweek services on Wednesday evenings at 7 PM (from February 14 through March 21) and also on Maundy Thursday (March 29) and Good Friday (March 30).

Also, on Ash Wednesday, I will be available at Beautiful Savior between 6 and 7 AM to impose ashes on anyone who wishes to consider a brief morning encounter with God as an opportunity to bear witness to the love of Christ for the day. I also will be available from noon until 12:15 PM.

Pastor Hillenbrand