

Year C – Ash Wednesday – March 5, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Remember that you are dust... and also, that you are loved.

Ash Wednesday is the day we begin Lent, and we honor this day by considering our mortality... that we are made of the same dust and dirt as all the rest of Creation, and when we die... which we all will, we return to the same dust and dirt.

It might seem odd to consider love, while also considering the dustiness of mortality ... until you consider WHO made you from the dust and dirt... and WHY.

Yes, you are dust... and dirt... but you were formed by God's own hands... formed in love. And you live because of the first gift God gives each of us... God's own breath... a gift given in love.

God breathed into you... breathed life and love into you... so that you might live.

Remembering that you are dust... also means... remembering that you are loved. And when the day comes that you return to dust... remember that you return to the presence of God... you return to the source of everlasting love.

So then, it is with ashes and love that we step into Lent... a season of repentance and fasting... of giving alms and engaging in works of love that glorify our God...

With ashes and love, we step into Lent, a season of preparation to behold God's defining act of defeating death on the cross.

With ashes and love, we step into Lent and we fast from the excesses in life... from whatever it is in our lives that comes between us and our God.

We fast, so we can more clearly recognize that when all else is gone... when all things become irrelevant, we know that God, and God's love, remain.

Fasting, giving alms, and engaging in works of love are not about making a show of our piety... it's about setting our hearts and minds on Christ and trusting that God is faithful and will not abandon us... because we are so deeply loved.

And... because we are so deeply loved, we also repent.

God, in love, calls us to return... return to me, says the Lord, with all your heart... God calls us to repent.

We must repent because we live in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves... and our sin holds us apart from God.

Our repentance is an acknowledgment of the hold that sin has over our lives... and our repentance frees us to fully receive the love and forgiveness God offers.

Our repentance... the kind of repentance that changes the way we live... the kind that guides us back toward God's justice... that kind of repentance... is rooted in love.

We repent... not to become worthy of God's love, but we repent because we ARE loved.

As the prophet Joel wrote..."Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger... and abounding in steadfast love."

Repent... and turn your face... return your attention... back to God... turn back to God's grace and mercy... to God's love, and forgiveness... and remember that it was God who formed you in love.

You were formed from the dust and dirt, and to the dust and dirt you will return... but you will never be without God's love.

So indeed... remember that you are dust... dust and dirt formed with *love* and given God's very breath of life... and when your life is complete... remember... that to dust you shall return... called home to eternal life with your God who loves you...

Remember that you are dust... and also, that you are loved.

Amen.