

FEBRUARY 26, 2020
ASH WEDNESDAY



Return to the Lord.

ASH WEDNESDAY BIBLE READINGS

Take time to read and reflect on these Bible passages as part of your Ash Wednesday observance.

Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17	A call to repentance
	Psalms 51:1-17	Have mercy on me, O God
	2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10	Messengers of Christ
	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21	Giving, praying, and fasting

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. **Joel 2:12-13 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for Ash Wednesday:

Dear God, create in us clean hearts, and put a new and right spirit within us for the sake of Christ our Lord. Amen. (Psalm 51:10)

Mealttime Prayer:

Lord God, whether we are eating food this day or being strengthened by your word, feed us with love and mercy in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Lord have mercy on you and forgive you all your sins. (Psalm 51:1)



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HYMN FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Return to God



ASH WEDNESDAY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What is something that makes you sad?
- The biblical term “return to the Lord” is a way of expressing regret for a broken relationship with God. When a relationship is broken, how does one seek forgiveness?
- What is it about the kind of God we have that frees us to return to the Lord?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17.

The Old Testament prophets held out little hope for public worship. Not Joel. He calls the people to hold a “solemn assembly” (v. 15) that brings all the people in, young and old alike, even newlyweds (v. 16). Repentance is often imagined as an individual act but not here. Joel does not mention what it is for which the people need to repent. It must be obvious. What are the obvious sins of our communities, even our nation and world? Ash Wednesday provides an opportunity for all God’s people to repent of our collective sins like racism, sexism, fear of people who are different, hatred that lashes out at others and with an indifference that attacks God’s creation itself. What would you name as the collective sins against God’s will? We are freed to come together and repent because we have the God who conquers divine justice with divine grace and mercy (v. 13). We need not fear the judgment of God. It leads us to God’s mercy. This Lent, how can we as God’s people gather for worship in homes and congregations and confess our collective misdeeds and lack of faith in God?

Pray: **Gracious and merciful God, bring us together that we may repent and receive the reconciliation only you can give, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

In Psalm 51, the focus of our sin is that it is an act against God. The words from Psalm 51:4a seem harsh but are a reality in our lives, “Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.” Be in prayer this week and ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness for the sins you have committed against God and others.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

The church season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts for 40 days. It ends the Saturday before Easter. Lent is a time to focus on our relationship with God. Draw a large cross or use a cross you may have hanging on the wall. Take your finger and trace around the shape of the cross while saying the Lord’s Prayer. Make this a daily practice throughout Lent this year.



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org