



Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor

LENTEN 2020

# IMPOSITION OF ASHES SERVICE

## ASH WEDNESDAY

# A BAPTIST VIEW ON THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

By Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Ash Wednesday marks the official beginning of the season of Lent. On this day, Christians all over the world receive a mark of ashes on their foreheads as an outward sign of an inward confession. Four years ago, I shared my vision that this congregation participate in the distribution, or imposition of ashes to mark this occasion. Initially there were many questions about what this act means and why the Alfred Street Baptist Church would participate in an observance that many associate with the Roman Catholic Church.



It is important to remember that much of what we do in Christian Protestantism, even though not fully acknowledged, is shaped and influenced by our Catholic roots. In Catholicism, the distribution of ashes is not a sacrament, meaning the ashes themselves are not a means of receiving grace; therefore non-Roman Catholics are permitted to receive the imposition of ashes. Many Protestant denominations distribute ashes as a memorial of the true purpose of Lent. When we participate in the imposition of ashes, we acknowledge that we are a part of the Church Universal.

As a member of the Church Universal who is unashamedly Baptist, I am committed to the doctrine of the infallibility and sufficiency of scripture. Thus, any practice of my discipleship must be informed, shaped, and supported by the word of God. The distribution of ashes, although not biblically commanded, is biblically supported, (as is the case with the celebration of Christmas). In the Bible, mourning and repentance were often marked by the wearing of sackcloth and ashes. Job wore ashes when he repented before God (Job 42:6); Jeremiah called Israel to wear ashes as they repented of their sin (Jer. 6:26); Daniel attached ashes to his fasting (Daniel 9:3); Jesus chastised the cities of Bethsaida and Chorazin for not repenting with ashes (Matthew 11:21, Luke 10:13), and in Ezekiel 9:4 a messenger of God is commanded to mark the foreheads of those who were repenting before the Lord.

The ashes are created by burning the palms from last year's Palm Sunday. This serves as a reminder that even though we celebrated Christ's act of redemption and our salvation, we still must repent repeatedly because we continue to sin. The ashes remind us that we come from ashes and to ashes we will return. They are mixed with oil in our tradition as a way of making them stick and reminding us that our sins are ever with us. However, here is the good news of Jesus Christ: the mark on our foreheads is in the shape of the cross, for it was on the cross that Christ paid the price for our sins and redeemed us back unto God. The mark of the cross is a visible witness for all to see as we boldly and without shame proclaim our faith to the world and our commitment to take up our cross and follow him.

## *~Please Enter in Silence~*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we invite you to the observance of Lent. We begin this season by acknowledging our need for repentance, prayer and meditation on God's Holy Word.

### PRAYER OF INVOCATION

(READ RESPONSIVELY)

O Lord, open my lips

**And my mouth will declare your praise**

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;

**You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.**

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:

**A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Amen<sup>a</sup>**

### “I AM THINE, O LORD” #358

Verse 1

I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, And it told Thy love to me;  
But I long to rise in the arms of faith, And be closer drawn to Thee.  
Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died;  
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To Thy previous, bleeding side.

### OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

**Joel 2:12-17**

<sup>12</sup> “Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

<sup>13</sup> Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. <sup>14</sup> Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

<sup>15</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. <sup>16</sup> Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the

breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. <sup>17</sup> Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, “Spare your people, LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

## “I AM THINE, O LORD” #358

### Verse 2

Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, By the pow’r of grace divine;  
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, And my will be lost in Thine.  
Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died;  
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To Thy previous, bleeding side.

## RESPONSIVE READING

### Psalm 102: 1-22

**Leader:** <sup>1</sup> Hear my prayer, LORD; let my cry for help come to you. <sup>2</sup> Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.

**People:** <sup>3</sup> For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers. <sup>4</sup> My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food.

**Leader:** <sup>5</sup> In my distress I groan aloud and am reduced to skin and bones. <sup>6</sup> I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. <sup>7</sup> I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof.

**People:** <sup>8</sup> All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse. <sup>9</sup> For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears <sup>10</sup> because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. <sup>11</sup> My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

**Leader:** <sup>12</sup> But you, LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. <sup>13</sup> You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come. <sup>14</sup> For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity.

**People:** <sup>15</sup> The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. <sup>16</sup> For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. <sup>17</sup> He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.

**Leader:** <sup>18</sup> Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD: <sup>19</sup> “The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, <sup>20</sup> to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death.”

**ALL:** <sup>21</sup> So the name of the LORD will be declared in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem <sup>22</sup> when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the LORD. <sup>b</sup>

## “I AM THINE, O LORD” #358

### Verse 3

O, the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend,  
When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend!  
Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died;  
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To Thy previous, bleeding side.

## NEW TESTAMENT LESSON

### Matthew 6:5:-13

<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

<sup>9</sup> “This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

## “I AM THINE, O LORD” #358

### Verse 4

There are depths of love that I cannot know Till I cross the narrow sea;  
There are heights of joy that I may not reach Till I rest in peace with Thee.  
Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died;  
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To Thy previous, bleeding side.

# EPISTLE LESSON

## 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10

<sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6</sup> As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation <sup>3</sup> We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. <sup>4</sup> Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; <sup>5</sup> in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; <sup>6</sup> in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; <sup>7</sup> in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; <sup>8</sup> through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; <sup>9</sup> known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

## BLESSING OF ASHES AND INVITATION TO RECEIVE ASHES

### IMPOSITION OF ASHES

*Minister shall impose ashes saying:*

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return"

*~Please depart in silent reflection~*



Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor

## MARCH GLADNESS

**Every Tuesday  
at 7:00pm**

### MARCH 3

Rev. Dr. William Curtis  
*Mount Ararat Baptist Church*

### MARCH 10

Rev. Dr. Renita Weems  
*Ray of Hope Community Church*

### MARCH 17

Rev. Dr. Charles Goodman, Jr.  
*Tabernacle Baptist Church*

### MARCH 24

*TBA*

### MARCH 31

Rev. Dr. John R. Faison, Sr.  
*Watson Grove Missionary  
Baptist Church*

## RESURRECTION WEEKEND

**Saturday, April 11, 6:00pm . . . Children's Pageant**

Alfred Street Baptist Church  
301 S. Alfred St., Alexandria, VA

**Sunday, April 12, 6:00am . . . Sunrise Easter Service**

Alfred Street Baptist Church  
301 S. Alfred St., Alexandria, VA

**10:30am . . . Easter Service**

Entertainment & Sports Arena (ESA)  
1100 Oak Dr. SE, Washington, DC

We welcome you to  
also join us for our  
regularly scheduled  
**Weekly Worship Services**

**Saturday 6:00pm**

**Sunday 7:30am, 9:30am & 11:30am**

**Sunday School starts at 9:30am**

**HigherGround, CrossOver, & Kids' Street**  
**at 11:30am every 1st, 3rd, 4th, & 5th Sunday**