

The Weekly Message from Darren Brandon

February 18, 2026

"Ashes and Crosses"



It's Ash Wednesday—the beginning of Lent. Today we receive ashes and hear the ancient words, "From dust you came, to dust you shall return."

Throughout the Bible, ashes are a sign of humility and repentance. In grief, Job encounters the holiness and greatness of God, he responds, "I repent in dust and ashes." Ash Wednesday begins the soul-searching journey of Lent. It is a process of realizing our limitations as we repent and turn to God.

Don't miss that the ashes we receive are in the shape of a cross - and that is not accidental. The cross is where human brokenness and divine mercy meet. We receive the sign of the cross and claim what God can do even with ashes. Isaiah 61 speaks of how God brings beauty from the ashes.

What if you took a step in trusting God more this Ash Wednesday? The Psalmist says, "take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (37:4)

Take a moment now and name what you most long for from God this season. Imagine that you are placing in God's care all your troubles: a prayer for someone you love, a burden you've been carrying, a fear, a longing. Let this moment be an act of trust - releasing what weighs you down and receiving God's mercy and care.

Even if all you see are ashes, know this- there is a crack in everything; that's how the light enters. The God who breathed life into dust is still at work in all that remains. And the day is coming when all will be made new.

Grace and Peace,

Darren