

Ash Weds Reflection: In the Dirt (Of the dirt)

If you haven't already, gather a bowl and some dirt, and join me...



Eventually, Everything falls apart.

Cars break down. Paint flakes off. Buildings collapse. Electronics quit working. I know... Cheery thought, right?

Yet, everything that is organic will eventually return to dust. Food decays. Flowers wilt, leaves brown and turn brittle as they fall from the sky. Skin wrinkles, hearts fail, flesh decomposes. In the end, everything turns back to ashes – to dirt – to dust.

On Ash Wednesday, we begin the season of Lent by marking ourselves on the outside to symbolize what we are like on the inside. In our lives, everyone has something that is falling apart. Along with our physical bodies, we live in the midst of our sins, fears, disappointments, and failures – And now it lies there in a pile of ashes.

I wonder What your pile looks like today?

Someday, our physical bodies will return to this earth. Genesis 3:19 tells us, “By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

In the midst of life, we are in death; from whom can we seek help?

Run your fingers through the dirt, and remember that you are part of the earth.

Thankfully, the pile of dirt and Ash is not the end!

Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. And, amid this creation, God, who raised Christ from the dead, will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you.

Listen! I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will be changed. So, thanks be to God who gives us that victory through Jesus Christ.”

Lent is a chance to remember both our mortality AND the Gift of Life that comes through Christ who lives in you. It is also a call to “Tend to your soul” – and renew or deepen your Spiritual habits that keep you connected to the Living Christ.

Instead of Ashes, I invite you to use the dirt to make Sign of the Cross on the back of your hand... As you do, say, “I repent and believe the Good News of Jesus”

The mark of the cross on the outside, reminds us of who we are on the inside. It reminds us of who God is, and what God has done in Christ for us, in spite of what WE have done – and continue to do. The Ashes of ruin are also the ground upon which comes our Rebirth. God takes the remains of our burnt up lives and refashions them with His love into something new. Jesus would not stay in the dust and dirt of the earth – and with Him, neither will we.

Psalm 51:1-2; 10-12 tells us, “Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make a willing spirit within me.”

The Sign of the Cross is a mark of Christian commitment, one that prompts ongoing and daily responses to fulfil that commitment. So, in the midst of our sin and dustiness, God calls us back to Him. He invites us to repent and believe His promise of redemption and new life. He calls us to a time of tending, cultivation, caring, listening, reflection, and responding.

I invite you to keep this Bowl of Soil visible for you throughout Lent. Place it somewhere in your space that you will regularly see it. It is a reminder to tend to your Spiritual soil.

It can be a call to work on your spiritual habits (prayer, reading scripture, worship, serving, sharing). Maybe, each time you see it, you might turn to God in prayer as you pursue whatever habit God is calling you to work on.

I wonder what tending your soil – and your soul – might look like for you over the next 6 weeks?

In worship, we will be considering what this might look like in practice. I hope you will join us on Sunday mornings as we explore this together.

Tending soil is metaphor to encourage spiritual growth AND maturity in our lives of faith. Hopefully, by Easter, there might be some tangible signs in your life of God’s inward and spiritual grace doing some work in you, around you, with you, and through you.

Who knows what this soil will look like – who knows what our souls will look like after 6 weeks of care from the best gardener that ever was or ever will be. In his hands, anything is possible.

Grace and Peace,

Rev Rob Hutchinson