

DAY 1 DUST



Genesis 3:19

"...for dust you are and to dust you will return."

The first day of Lent is celebrated by the service of "Ash Wednesday." Many Christians from all over the world will attend a service where their foreheads are crossed with ashes. The practice reminds us that we are creatures of dust. We were formed out of the dust, and eventually, we will return to dust.

This is not something that we are generally very comfortable with meditating on, but the season of lent necessitates that we consider our limitations. This particular

comes at the end of Genesis 3, and Genesis 3 is all about our sin's consequences. What enters the story in Genesis 3 is the deadly effects of sin. "We are fragile, fallible, and fallen human beings. From the very moment we emerge from our mother's womb, we begin the process of dying." - Hudson

I think this is a challenge for us to overcome because we are used to innovation. In the modern world, we have been conditioned to believe that we can overcome any and all obstacles that face us. The myth of modern progress has always been—give us enough time, and we will overcome and solve all issues. But what the modern world can't come to grips with is the human limitation that Genesis 3 reminds us of.

Now, this shouldn't render us apathetic, and this shouldn't render us ungrateful for the incredible innovation and advancement in areas of justice, medicine, etc. But lent reminds us that we were created from dust, and to dust, we will, in fact, return. The grim imagery of all of us eventually returning to dust is startling. It humbles us and forces us to stare deeply into the void of life that we are all at some point exposed to.

No wonder we avoid thinking about this reality. No wonder we struggle with our own limitations. Because when we begin to sense how near to nothing we are, we can easily find ourselves in despair.

However, while Ash Wednesday is about dust and our return to dust, it is always about the mark of the cross. The dust placed on the forehead of those attending an Ash Wednesday service are reminded of dust and the cross. And the marking of the cross on our foreheads is the reminder that even though we are made from this dust and left to ourselves, we would return to dust; we are infinitely more than that. We are the beloved of God, and nothing - not even death - will separate us from the work of Jesus Christ and the love of God. "Our dust is charged with God's own life-sustaining and death-defeating breath. We are beloved dust." - Hudson

Daily Practice

Go outside and pick up a handful of soil. As you do so, focus on these two symbols: dust and the cross. Even as you wash the dirt from your hands, remember the reality of your identity: You are dust redeemed by the cross.

The below reflections are written by congregants & staff of CPC. All reflections are following Trevor Hudson's book *Pauses for Lent* and are both heavily influenced and borrowed from his work. Any quotes without attribution should be credited to him.