

"The meaning of the ashes" Psalm 51 Ash Wednesday 2023

Grace and peace in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today we begin the season of Lent with the imposition of ashes.

The ashes mean three things for us:

Mourning the death of Jesus Christ. In ancient times, people sprinkled ashes on their heads to symbolize mourning the loss of loved ones. In the season of Lent, we remember that our Lord and Savior died for us.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness; Let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. "

According to Martin Luther, the rite of purification in Numbers 19: 17-19 is a foreshadowing of our cleansing by the blood of Christ. The high priest used the herb hyssop in this rite, sprinkling the unclean with ritual water, prepared with fresh spring water and the ashes of a red heifer.

As our High Priest, Christ sacrificed himself on the cross for us. Now we receive His true body and blood in the sacrament. Also in the water of baptism the Lord washes us and removes our sins.

"The meaning of the ashes" Psalm 51 Ash Wednesday 2023

Our sinful nature. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, God cast them out of paradise and pronounced judgment against them. Genesis 3:19 says, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." To receive the ashes in the shape of the cross expresses our repentance of our sins and the hope of new life in Christ, through his death and resurrection.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; And my sin is ever before me. Against you, only you have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight: Why are proved right when you speak, And blameless when you judge ".

We have in Psalm 51 King David's confession of his adultery with the woman Bathsheba and murder of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband. The prophet Nathan was sent to confront David with the condemnation of the Law of God. The king confessed his sin and received God's forgiveness.

However, the Psalmist confesses not only his actual sins, also original sin, the inheritance of Adam and Eve.

"The meaning of the ashes" Psalm 51 Ash Wednesday 2023

"Behold, in iniquity I have been formed, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross covers original sin as actual sins.

We are living sacrifices. The psalmist speaks of burnt offerings, sacrifices of lambs and calves burnt offering.

"Create in me, O God, a clean heart; And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence; And take not your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation; And with your free spirit sustain me. "

We use this verse in the liturgy after having received forgiveness in confession and absolution, and the body and blood of the Lord in the Sacrament. We pray to God that the Holy Spirit continues to live in our hearts and lead us in a godly life.

On Ash Wednesday, we recall the ashes of burnt offering and the truth that there is no need for more propitiatory sacrifices, because our spotless Lamb, Christ died once for all on the cross. Now we make the sacrifices of thanks from broken spirit and humble heart. Amen.