

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

17 FEBRUARY 2021

Lent Devotion/Day 1/Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Lenten season. Its name comes from the traditional service of the church in which the priest or minister places ashes upon the forehead of each person saying, "Remember, O man, that thou art dust; and unto dust thou shalt return." This is done as a symbol of sorrow and repentance in preparation for the Lenten emphasis upon spiritual growth and renewal. The ashes for the service are obtained by burning some of the palm branches saved from the previous Palm Sunday. The Ash Wednesday traditions grew from the references to sackcloth and ashes as a symbol of repentance mentioned so frequently in the Old Testament.

-from ***Family Lenten Happenings*** written by Marie Livingston Roy, Nashville, Tennessee, 1977.

Psalm 32 (NIV)

- 1** Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
- 2** Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.
- 3** When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- 4** For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.[Selah]
- 5** Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD and you forgave the guilt of my sin".[Selah]
- 6** Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
- 7** You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.[Selah]
- 8** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.
- 9** Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding/but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
- 10** Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD'S unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.
- 11** Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Selah – Breath or pause to the reader; not to be read out loud.

When we fall short of what God expects – when we commit sins – God is eager to forgive us, our psalm says. God is our "hiding place" (v.7). God's love is unfailing (v.10). So, sin and forgiveness belong together.

The author writes about experiencing forgiveness in the second part of the psalm. The author owns up to sin, or confesses it. The psalmist says matter-of-factly that God "forgave the guilt of my sin" (v.5). What happened here? How does the psalmist know that sin is forgiven? The text does not say.

What is clear, though, is that the psalmist is confident of God's forgiveness. This confidence has two consequences. One is grateful rejoicing in God's gift of forgiveness (v.11). The second is the author's eagerness to teach others about God's law (vv.8-10).

Prayer: *"Oh God, throughout these forty days of Lent, make us aware of how we fail to live up to your vision for our lives. And make us even more aware of your forgiveness, shown most clearly in Jesus Christ, our Savior." Amen.*

-excerpt from The Reverend Dr. Timothy Lincoln, Associate Dean for Seminary Effectiveness and Director, Stitt Library. **Lent: Reflection, repentance, and renewal.** Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.