

Last Wednesday, February 22, we began the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. It did not begin the way I had hoped, with a snowstorm keeping most people away from recognizing this holy day. But though the weather seemingly got in the way, Lent still arrived.

But what is Ash Wednesday and this season of Lent? Some mishear this word and think it is something you find in your dryer or in your belly button (sorry, that was kind of gross). Some of you might have bad memories of being told that you need to give something up; something meaningful to show your devotion to God, but it only ends up being a season of resentment. Some use this season as an excuse to remove a bad habit or take away some food that is bad for you. And though some health benefits seem to be noticeable, it is anything but God-glorifying. For many, Lent is misunderstood or completely ignored. But though there is nothing in Scripture that says, "*Thou must recognize the season of Lent*", there are some benefits to the follower of Jesus.

Lent is a season of preparation and reflection. Reflection on our mortality, the fact that you and I will someday die. We will die because that is God's judgment for sin. Romans 6:23 says, "***For the wages of sin is death...***" But the verse does not end there. It continues by saying, "**...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" And so, on Ash Wednesday, many Christians receive ashes on their forehead in the sign of the cross. The ashes signifying death, but also pointing to repentance (turning away from sin). These ashes are placed on the forehead in the sign of the cross signifying the fact that through the cross of Jesus, death is not the end. Though, as sinners, we deserve the sentence of death, God redeems sinners via His amazing grace, love, and mercy.

And so, we have this season of Lent. We spend these forty days (Sundays are not included in the count) remembering who we are, sinners under the sentence of death, but also whose we are; children of God through faith in Jesus. This season then culminates with the vigil of Easter and then the following day, Easter Sunday, the resurrection of our Lord. The preparation part of this season is participating in spiritual disciplines like fasting, meditation, scripture reading, prayer, etc – those things that draw one closer to God. But these are not something you just do for a season. The hope is, that spending these forty days in these disciplines, they will become a habit for you as your relationship with God through Jesus deepens and strengthens, and thus drawing you ever closer to holiness and away from sin.

If you do not know Jesus, well, come and talk to me and let's get you started. There is no time like the present to hear the Good News of your future. To God be all glory, in Jesus' name, Amen.