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Remember That You Are Dust

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Remember That You Are Dust

Abstract

"In our hurry to get through the forty days of Lent and to the celebration of Easter, this psalm slows us down."

Posting about God's call to repentance from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/remember-that-you-are-dust/>

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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Liz Moss

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 143](#)

[Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41](#)

[Matthew 22:23-33](#)

It was the beginning of Lent that midwinter's night. The church calendar calls the day, "Ash Wednesday." On that night, people had come together in the dimly lit sanctuary to begin a season of repentance as a people in need of mercy and grace. We sang songs of remembrance—remembering who we were and to whom we belonged. We prayed prayers of confession to acknowledge the wandering of our ways, the wasting of our gifts, and our forgetfulness in receiving an abundance of love. And, we sat in silence, listening for the voice of forgiveness in the midst of our sin.

Then the people solemnly walked to the front of the sanctuary. My finger dipped into the cup filled with the ashes from the burnt Palm Sunday branches, and I slowly made the dark mark on each one's forehead.

I looked into the woman's eyes—the one who came knowing her guilt and shame—and whispered, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, but the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."

I looked into the child's eyes, as she held onto her father's hand, and reminded her, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, but the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."

And, next was the older man, who was tired and worn out from his years of labor, and I said to him, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, but the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."

Again, I took the ashes from the cup and drew the cross on her forehead and said to the one who came with much sadness and grief, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, but the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."

To the woman, filled with resentment and blame for others whom she felt had wronged her, I said, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, but the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."

And, over and over again I repeated the words: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return, but the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."

As forgetful people, we need to remember whose we are and what we are. As sinful people, we are called to repent and return to following the ways of the Lord. As God's chosen and beloved people, we confess our need for forgiveness. We cannot do this alone. We need the steadfast love of Jesus.

Psalm 143 is often referred to as a psalm to inform and guide the practice of returning to God and the repentance of our sins.

"Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness." (verse 1) "Save me, O Lord, from my enemies; I have fled to you for refuge." (verse 9) "For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life. In your righteousness bring me out of trouble." (verse 11)

It is a psalm of acknowledging our sinful ways, and it is a psalm of confessing that righteousness can only be found in God and God alone.

“Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.” (verse 2) “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God,” the psalmist confesses. (verse 10) For, “I am your servant.” (verse 2 and 12)

Psalm 143 is a psalm reminding us of the faithfulness and righteousness of God.

“I remember the days of old, I think about all your deeds, I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirst for you like a parched land.” (verse 5 and 6) “Save me, O Lord, from your enemies; I have fled to you for refuge.” (verse 9)

And, Psalm 143 is a good psalm to read today—five weeks into the season of Lent. It is a psalm to remind us once again of Ash Wednesday.

In our hurry to get through the forty days of Lent and to the celebration of Easter, this psalm slows us down. Yes, Resurrection Day will come but lest we forget to remember our need for resurrecting in the first place. We are in need of repentance. We are in need of mercy. We are in need of grace.

Read Psalm 143 again. This time, read the psalm as a prayer of confession.

What words of confession can you pray to God on this day?

How have you wandered from God’s way, wasted your gifts, and forgotten God’s love?

How, in your life and actions, do you tend to skip over the season of repentance to the season of forgiveness?