

FEBRUARY 17, 2021  
ASH WEDNESDAY



*You are God's and to God you shall return.*

## ASH WEDNESDAY BIBLE READINGS

Take time to read and reflect on these Bible passages as part of your Ash Wednesday observance.

Wednesday Isaiah 58:1-12	Worship God by showing justice
2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10	Ambassadors for Christ
Psalms 51:1-17	A prayer for cleansing
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21	The practice of faith

## SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10 (NRSV)*

## PRAYERS AND BLESSING

### A Prayer for Ash Wednesday:

Merciful God, you love all that you have created; create in me, O Lord, a clean heart through Christ Jesus. Amen.

### Mealtime Prayer:

Loving God, as you share with us your food from creation, help us to share bread with the hungry. Amen. (Isaiah 58:7)

### A Blessing to Give:

May your heart be filled with joy and your soul rejoice. (Psalm 51:8)



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HYMN FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

*Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God*



## ASH WEDNESDAY MILESTONES



Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

## CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What is something that you regret or makes you sad?
- What is something that brings you joy?
- How does knowing that you are loved by God move you from regrets and sadness to joy?

## DEVOTIONS



Read: Psalm 51:1-17.

These words are poetic, beautiful, and have been used frequently in the church. They offer a contemplative mood as words used in the offertory (vv. 10-12) and an expression of confidence during the morning prayer service (v. 15). For Ash Wednesday, the words communicate our desire for repentance and renewal. What can be overlooked is the focus on joy that this psalm desires: “Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice” (v. 8); and, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation” (v. 12). It is hard not to associate Ash Wednesday with the piety of giving something up for the Lenten season. Perhaps this is the year to give up sadness and to focus on the joy God wants for us and the praise we give our merciful God. Remorse and confession of sins is an appropriate practice for Lent and throughout the year. However, the outcome of our Christian faith is to be freed from our brokenness that we may be people of joy and gladness. Contemplate your desire and need for forgiveness. How do you experience God’s mercy and steadfast love in a way that brings you joy?

Pray: **Loving God, as we begin a new season of Lent, give us new hearts to love you and fill us with joy in your presence through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## SERVICE



Lent is a season for serving and giving. Consider doing a “30-Minute Service Challenge” this Lent. Each week, commit to an act of community service for 30 minutes. This may involve contributing time to a community program, doing something kind for a neighbor, visiting a person who is elderly or homebound, or helping someone who has a particular need. Each time you finish your service, think or talk about what it meant to you and those you served.

## RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



On this Ash Wednesday, do some simple ritual act that keeps your focus on God and God’s word. Perhaps you fast by eating simple meals or skipping a meal all together and use the extra time to read the Bible passages for Ash Wednesday. For example, pray Psalm 51:1-17 as a prayer of repentance and close with the words: **You are God’s, and to God you shall return.**

