

40 DAYS OF LENT: DAY #1 Ash Wednesday

WORD OF TODAY: Joel 2:12-13 (ESV)

12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

THOUGHTS ON THE WORD:

On this first day of the Lenten Season, many will be marked on the forehead with ashes mixed with blessed unction oil. The ashes are produced from the burning of the blessed palm crosses remaining, or returned, from last year's Palm Sunday. It's a sobering moment that puts our very lives into perspective and brings forth a conviction that we are sinners and face the curse of sin, which is death. "Yet even now," declares the LORD....

Yet even now we remember that the LORD our God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. The LORD our God desires the sinner to rend their hearts for Him, it is His desire that we be truly penitent.

Today is the beginning of this season of devotion to do just that, to be truly penitent; to rend our hearts, and to return to Almighty God. And the LORD desires that we return to Him with all our hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. What is it in your heart that keeps you from returning? Will you commit to a fast-denying yourself something today that is temporally satisfying to the honor and glory of God? Will you weep for the wrongs you have committed? Will you mourn for the distance your sin has caused between you and Almighty God? Will you turn away from your sin, and return to God?

PERSONAL REFLECTION (Spend a few minutes reflecting on the Word and the thoughts presented. What do you hear, and how might you respond?):

TIME MEDITATING (How long did you give your attention to God's Word?):

REVEALED THROUGH SELF-EXAMINATION (What conviction(s) were revealed?):

TODAY'S CONFESSION:

TODAY'S PRAYER:

TODAY'S FAST (What will you deny yourself today?):

TODAY'S ALMS-GIVING (What will you give to another today?):