

WE ARE MARKED

(Psalm 51: 1-17)

Intro: On Sunday.

-Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

#His face was changed.

*To reveal his heavenly glory.

Now it is Wednesday.

-Ash Wednesday.

#We are the ones whose faces have been changed.

*But not with the radiance of a heavenly reflection.

*Rather with the ashen smudges of a cross.

-We are marked people.

#Marked for all the world to see.

#There is no way for us to save face.

-We are marked.

#What does this mean?

I. We Are Dust.

A. That's The Way We Were Created.

1. In Genesis 2: 7.

a. God created the man from the dust of the ground.

-Adam.

#From the adamah.

2. In Genesis 3: 19.

a. God pronounces judgment upon the man who has sinned.

-As also God has pronounced judgment upon:

#Snake.

*Genesis 3: 14-15.

#Woman.

*Genesis 3: 16.

b. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

-Genesis 3: 19.

3. One Ash Wednesday.

a. Pastor was putting ashes on the foreheads of the congregants.

-With the words:

#"Remember that you are but dust,"

#"And to dust you shall return."

- b. Little girl sitting near the front.
 - Got a puzzled look on her face.
 - Pulled on her mommy's sleeve.
 - Said:
 - #"Mommy, what's butt dust?"
 - 4. I don't know what butt dust is.
 - a. It sounds like something that could be taken care of with:
 - Bath.
 - Shower.
 - b. But to remember that you are but dust.
 - That is another matter indeed.
 - There is no known cure for that.
- B. We Are Going To Die.
- 1. When we are:
 - a. Young.
 - b. Healthy.
 - We don't give that very much thought, do we?
 - We are too busy living.
 - #This life that God has given us is a wonderful gift.
 - *Enjoy it.
 - *Celebrate it.
 - 2. But sometimes things happen that get us to thinking more about death.
 - a. Friend or loved one dies.
 - b. Our bodies start to talk back to us.
 - We can't move 10" of snow the way we used to.
 - Doctors start to diagnose problems.
 - #Backs.
 - #Knees.
 - #Prostates.
 - #Hearts.
 - #Kidneys.
 - Our parts are starting to wear out.
 - 3. Last week I called my dad.
 - a. To wish him a "Happy Valentine's Day."
 - b. Among other news he shared:
 - He was selling his car.
 - c. My dad is 91.
 - He drives less than 1000 miles per year.
 - #Church and back.
 - #Doctor and back.
 - #Dentist and back.
 - #My sister's house and back.

- His driver's license will expire on his 92nd birthday.
- Last time he got his license renewed.
 - #Six years ago.
 - #Eight years ago.
 - *However long a Wisconsin license is good for.
 - #He said:
 - *"This should get me home to Glory."
 - +But maybe it won't.
 - He's still in reasonably good health.
 - #But he's not sure he could pass the driver's test again.
- d. I asked him if he had had problems driving.
 - He said:
 - #"No, I haven't had any problems."
 - #"But I'm not going to live forever."
- 4. It's not just our bodies that are going to die.
 - a. Our dreams.
 - b. Our ambitions.
 - c. Our relationships.
- 5. Ashes on our foreheads make the same statement.
 - a. Remember that you are dust.
 - b. To dust you shall return.

II. We Are Sinners.

A. Psalm 51.

- 1. Penitential psalm.
 - a. Personal lament.
 - b. Personal confession.
- 2. Subheading.
 - a. A Psalm of David.
 - b. When the prophet Nathan came to him.
 - c. After he had gone in to Bathsheba.
- 3. Those subheadings.
 - a. Not part of the original text.
 - b. Added later.
 - Like the 2-3 lines added before our readings.
 - #In the Sunday bulletin.
 - Give a:
 - #Summary.
 - #Overview.
 - +Of the text.
 - c. But the tradition has associated this psalm.
 - With David and Bathsheba.

4. You know the story of David and Bathsheba, don't you?
 - a. 2 Samuel 11-12.
 - b. David was the King of Israel.
 - c. One day he was on the roof of his palace.
 - Palace was taller than all the surrounding buildings.
 - d. He looked out to see a beautiful woman.
 - Bathing.
 - Sunbathing.
 - e. He liked what he saw.
 - He sent for her.
 - #Was it seduction?
 - #Was it rape?
 - *He was the king.
 - *He had the power.
5. Was this just a spur of the moment impulse?
 - a. When David was overcome with:
 - Desire.
 - Lust.
 - Temptation.
 - b. Or was it something more?
6. I'm inclined to think that David's actions were much more sinister.
 - a. David's affair with Bathsheba occurred in the spring of the year.
 - When king's normally go forth to war.
 - #2 Samuel 11:1.
 - #That's a sad commentary of what kings do.
 - But David was a warrior.
 - #From the time of his youth.
 - *When he killed Goliath with his sling shot.
 - +1 Samuel 17:40-54.
 - #We have numerous accounts of David.
 - *Going to war with his troops.
 - +David was the commander-in-chief.
 - But this year David decided to stay home.
 - #Why?
 - b. David probably knew Bathsheba.
 - Her father.
 - #Eliam.
 - #2 Samuel 11:3.
 - Her grandfather.
 - #Ahithophel.
 - #2 Samuel 23:34.
 - Were David's:
 - #Counselors.
 - #Advisors.

- David knew her family.
 - #It seems reasonable to me:
 - *David knew her.
 - *David had watched her grow up.
 - *David stayed home from the war on purpose.
 - +His affair with her was no accident.
- 7. Certainly the cover-up was carefully and deliberately planned.
 - a. Bathsheba was married.
 - When she became pregnant.
 - David tried to cover up his sin.
 - b. Plan A.
 - Bathsheba's husband Uriah was a soldier in David's army.
 - #Serving on the front lines.
 - *Which David had chosen to avoid.
 - David ordered Uriah home on leave.
 - #Figuring:
 - *Uriah would go home.
 - *He would sleep with his wife.
 - *When she turned up pregnant.
 - +He would assume:
 - =Oh, it must have been that time I was home on leave.
 - But Uriah was a dedicated soldier.
 - #Soldiers on active duty were to be celibate.
 - *1 Samuel 21:5.
 - #Uriah said:
 - *"It's not fair that my buddies should be out on the battlefield."
 - + "Sleeping on the ground."
 - *"I should be home enjoying the pleasures of my:"
 - + "Bed."
 - + "Wife."
 - *"I will sleep in the city gate."
 - So now what was David to do?
 - c. Plan B.
 - David threw a banquet for Uriah.
 - #Served him wine.
 - #Got him drunk.
 - Hoping:
 - #Uriah would go home.
 - #He would sleep with his wife.
 - #When she told Uriah she was pregnant.

- *He would think:
 - + It must have been that time.
 - = I was home on leave
 - = King threw a banquet for me.
- But no matter how much wine Uriah had.
 - #He refused to go home.
 - #He slept again in the city gate.
- Now what was David to do?
- d. Plan C.
 - David sent Uriah back to the front lines.
 - #Along with orders for his general, Joab.
 - *Uriah was to be placed in the front lines.
 - *Fortified city wall was to be attacked.
 - +Poor tactics.
 - *At a given signal.
 - +Rest of the troops were to fall back.
 - *Uriah was not let in on those instructions.
 - Attack against the fortified city wall was launched.
 - #Signal was given for the troops to fall back.
 - *Uriah was left out there all alone.
 - +Sitting duck.
 - *Uriah was killed.
 - David had conspired to commit murder.
 - #To cover up his adultery with Bathsheba.
 - 8. David might have gotten away with murder.
 - a. Except someone knew.
 - God knew.
 - b. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with his sin.
 - That was risky business.
 - #If David could knock off one of his own soldiers.
 - #He could certainly take out a wimpy little prophet.
 - *Like Nathan.
 - c. But Nathan was clever.
 - Instead of confronting David directly.
 - Nathan told:
 - #Story.
 - #Parable.
 - *Two neighbors.
 - +Rich man.
 - +Poor man.
 - *Rich man had:
 - +Flocks.
 - +Herds.
 - = In abundance.

*Poor man had:

+One, single solitary sheep.

=More like a family pet.

=Than a piece of livestock.

*One day the rich man had company.

+He wanted to serve a nice meal for his guests.

=But instead of taking one of his many sheep.

-From his many herds.

=He took the one lamb that belonged to his neighbor.

-Killed it.

-Served it to his guests.

d. When David heard this story he was outraged.

-He said:

#“That man deserves to die.”

e. Nathan had set David up perfectly.

-David had condemned himself out of his own mouth.

#Nathan said:

*“You are the man!”

+2 Samuel 12: 7.

9. If Psalm 51 doesn't come directly from David.

a. It certainly fits his situation.

b. He confesses:

-“Have mercy on me, O God.”

-“I've messed up big time.”

-“I've sinned against you, you alone.”

-“I am guilty.”

-“I have been a sinner:”

#“Since the day I was born.”

#“Since the moment I was conceived.”

B. We're Not So Different From David.

1. We are sinners.

a. Sometimes we are caught up in the moment.

-Overtaken by temptation.

#In a moment of weakness.

*Saying.

*Doing.

+ Things we know to be wrong.

b. Sometimes we are more much more sinister.

-Planning our moves.

-Plotting our cover-up.

2. We are sinners.
 - a. From the day of our birth.
 - b. From the moment of our conception.
 - It is not just against one another that we sin.
 - We sin against God.
3. The cross on our foreheads tells us the same thing.

III. That Cross Also Reminds Us That We Are Redeemed.

A. Psalm 51.

1. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow."
 - a. Psalm 51:7.
 - b. Do you know what hyssop is?
 - Hyssop is:
 - #Plant.
 - #Branch of a plant.
 - Used in rites of purification.
 - #Someone who has been around:
 - *Leper.
 - +Leviticus 14.
 - *Corpse.
 - +Numbers 19:11-22.
 - #Was considered unclean.
 - *Hyssop was to be dipped in water.
 - +Water was then sprinkled on the unclean person.
 - Hyssop was used on the first Passover.
 - #When God sent the angel of death.
 - *To kill the first born.
 - +Human.
 - +Animal.
 - =Throughout all the land of Egypt.
 - *Except in those houses.
 - +Where the Hebrew people had:
 - =Killed an unblemished lamb.
 - Eaten the meat of that sacrifice.
 - =Taken the hyssop.
 - Painted the doorposts of their houses.
 - #With the blood of the lamb.
 - *Exodus 12.
 - *Exodus 34.

2. But the psalmist needs more than an external cleansing.
 - a. "Create in me a clean heart, O God,"
 - b. "And put a new and right spirit within me."
-Psalm 51:9.

B. Don't We Need The Same Thing?

1. To be cleansed:
 - a. By the waters.
-Of Holy Baptism.
 - b. By the blood of the lamb.
-Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin.
2. To be renewed in:
 - a. Heart.
 - b. Spirit.
-Repenting.
#Forgiven.
-Repenting.
#Forgiven.

Concl: Remember:

- You are dust, and to dust you shall return.
- You have been marked with the cross of Christ forever.