

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Ash Wednesday 3/6/19
Fr. Rick Veit Sermon

I am but dust and to dust shall I return... We are but dust. That is all we are, created by God, beautiful, disgusting, joyfully filled with the Spirit, dragged down into the desert, fulfilled, empty.

The ashes have always been a creepy thing for me. But, ironically, Ash Wednesday is one of my favorite holidays in the church year. It is a day when we acknowledge our fleeting lives that will blow away at some point, poof, a memory, that is all you will have left of me, and you. And people will grieve, and then they will go on with their lives. At some point there will be nothing left, except ashes, and the fullness of our presence will be in heaven away from this world.

What are we making of our lives? Are we honoring God and loving and caring for each other each and every day?

I wonder if Luke Perry was. You know, the glamorous and handsome tv star from 90210. It frightened me a bit. He was 52 years old. He had a massive stroke this past week and never recovered. He died. He became dust. Poof. In a moment, he was gone. He returned to his creator. I am going to be 52 this August...and I do not want to leave yet. But if I did, could I say that this was a great life? Hmm. I would say that it has been great, and difficult, and devastating at times. I have been rejected and have failed, and I have been filled with excitement and had joyful moments as well – complete success, at times. I have lived with anxiety and fear and sadness...and with incredible smiles and laughter, even gut-wrenching laughter. God gave me, and all of us, family and friends, a church community that is our family. God has given us a world of people and animals and living things, all of which are a part of our family also. God has drawn us to do what is right through his Spirit that leads us to The Way, The Jesus Way. God has been gentle with us when we have been lowly in heart, when things have not gone so well in our lives. God has forgiven us, and loved us, and loved us without condition.

Am I pleased? Yes, and no. But God is God, and I am who I am, God's beautiful creation, and so are you. And that beautiful creation will eventually become dust one day, perhaps fertilizing daffodils and daisies, but definitively back with our Lord in heaven, safe and sound. Just not yet, Lord. But if it happens, or when it happens, thank you Lord for a life well-lived.

Ash Wednesday is about celebration and humility. For the next forty days we will be in the desert, not alone, but with Jesus and each other. Make the most of it. Trust in the only one who can fulfill you in the midst of a world that will never be able to fully fulfill you. It will always fall short. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and he will make your paths straight, and love you through it all.