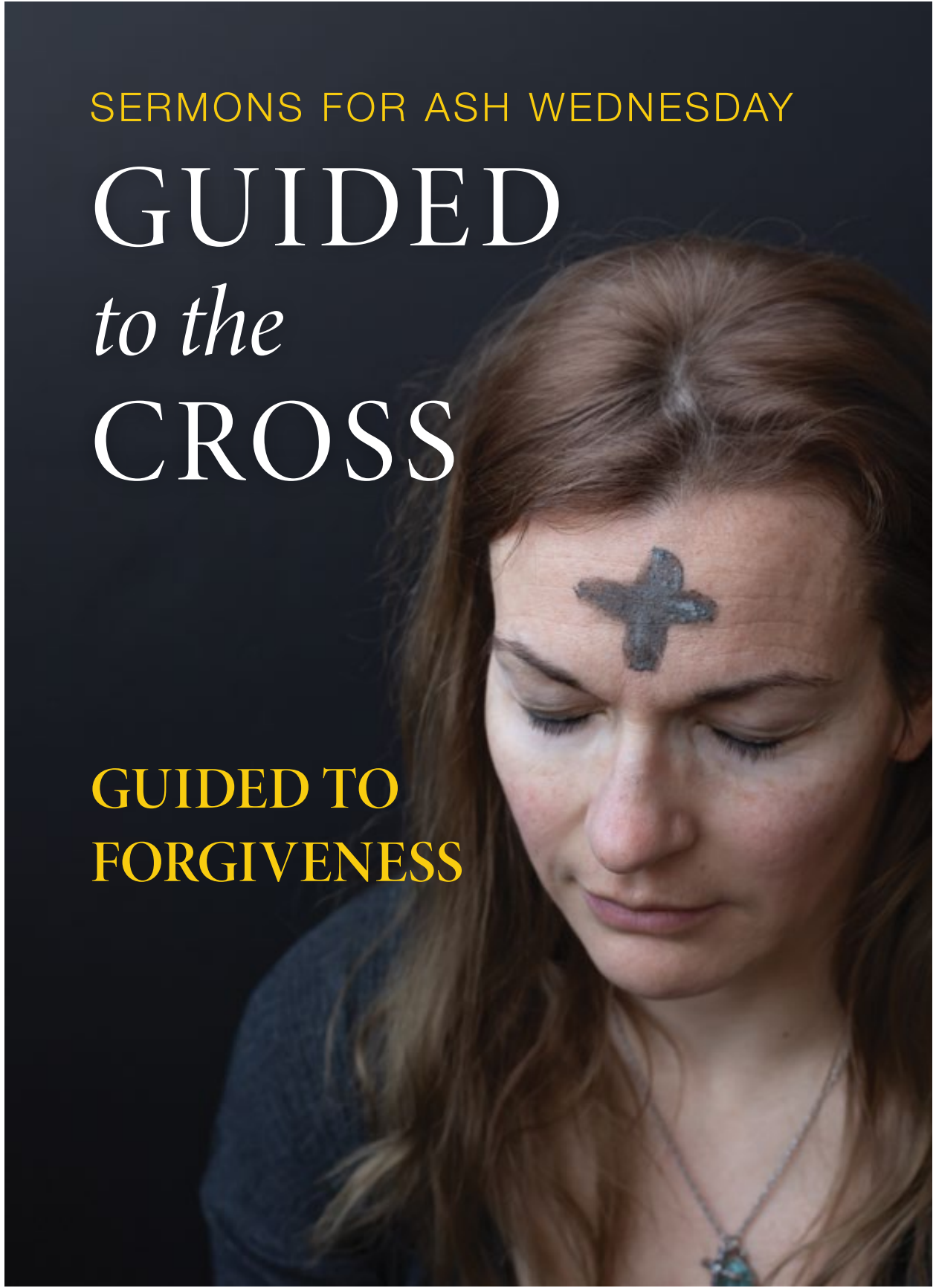


SERMONS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

GUIDED  
*to the*  
CROSS

GUIDED TO  
FORGIVENESS



SERMONS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

# GUIDED *to the* CROSS

GUIDED TO FORGIVENESS

## INDEX

Sermon.....	5-8
Children's sermon .....	9

Sermon by Mark Zimmermann. Children's sermon by Carol Geisler. Art and design: Jamie Wyatt. © 2024 Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc., 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026. 800-325-9414. [www.creativecommunications.com](http://www.creativecommunications.com). All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Purchase of these sermons gives the purchaser the copyright release to use the material in any format for use in worship.

SERMONS FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

# GUIDED *to the* CROSS

GUIDED TO FORGIVENESS

## SERMON

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

**P** Grace, mercy and peace to you, my dear Christian friends. Welcome to Ash Wednesday. Welcome to the season of Lent, and welcome to this journey being guided to the cross of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

It is typical to call the 40-day season of Lent a journey. Because that is what it is. We are journeying with our Lord as he heads to the cross. But what are we going to find there? That is what we are exploring tonight and in the weeks to come on the road to Calvary.

Consider me your tour guide on this trek to the tree where Jesus died. What do we see on this night, and what will we see along the way?

On this Ash Wednesday, the first thing we can't help but see is ashes—ashes placed on our foreheads in the shape of a cross to remind us that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Why ash? Because since ancient times, people wore sackcloth and ashes when they were sorrowful, repentant and grieving, all of which we do this night as we ponder the depth of our sins and the turning away we have done—turning away from God to do our own thing, to follow evil or destructive or prideful paths. We mourn with St. Paul that the bad things we don't want to do end up being the exact things we do end up doing. Woe to us.

The symbol of ash and dust also points us back to Adam, the first man, whom God made from the dust of the earth and breathed life into. That man Adam would sin, as we all have, and Adam died, as we all will one day, and turned back into dust, as we, too, will when our time on earth is over. We are human; we are finite; we are of the earth and will go back to the earth. There is no getting around that fact. It is a fact of life that has no detour.

So this day, we remember that we are sinners and that we will die. Morbid thoughts for sure. But what makes the difference, even on this sad and somber day? The cross. The ashes are placed on our foreheads in the sign of the cross.

It is the sign of the cross that points us in a new direction, a hopeful direction. Yes, we are sinners, and yes, we will die. But the cross of Christ can help us with those fundamental problems to our very being. The cross guides us to a fresh start that puts sin behind us and makes death only a stepping stone to everlasting life.

How does this happen? Through forgiveness! Forgiveness is the bedrock upon which we build our faith in Christ. Forgiveness is the number one calling card of the cross. We go to the cross in Lent again and again to confess our sins and there receive forgiveness.

How do we know this is true? Because Jesus showed forgiveness from the cross in spoken word. He said of those who were putting him on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Our human nature would want to be angry at those who caused us harm, but Jesus, in his divinity, removed the punishment they deserved by letting their sins go in that moment.

We, like those who tortured Jesus by placing him on the cross, do not know what we are doing either. We are sinning again and again when we should be loving and reaching out and caring. But what the cross teaches us is that Jesus was not just forgiving a few people on that cross. He was forgiving the whole world. By his sinless suffering and death, he was not just forgiving the sins happening right then but the sins of all people who ever lived on earth and the sins of all people who will ever live on earth. His forgiveness from the cross is that great, that all-encompassing, that universal, that complete. There is no one that Jesus is not forgiving by going to the cross. All those who kneel at the foot of the cross and confess their sins to Christ are forgiven, no questions asked. Our remorse over our sin, our knowledge and acceptance of this amazing gift from the Crucified Christ is what opens the door to an outpouring of unconditional forgiveness and love from our Savior.

As fully forgiven people, then, we should live lives of forgiveness. Our lives should be steered by the guiding principle of forgiveness for all, no matter what they have done. But that is not how the world normally operates. In our world today, there is a lot of emphasis on revenge and vengeance and punishment for wrongdoing. People have to pay for the bad things they have done, our human nature tells us. And we as Christians agree. There is no getting around the