

Simply One Page-God Who Stoops

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision motivated by my one page intent. Mike Haddorff 2608

Ash Wednesday begins with a gesture that is both humbling and honest. Ashes are placed on our foreheads, and we hear the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." There is no triumph in this moment. No accomplishment. Just truth.

We come from the earth. We return to the earth. And somehow, within that fragile space, God meets us.

What strikes me is that Ash Wednesday does not invite us to rise, but to bow. It places us low, close to the ground. And that, I've come to see, is exactly where God so often chooses to be.

One of the most arresting images in the Gospels appears in the story of the woman caught in adultery. As accusations rise and stones are gathered, Jesus does something unexpected. He stoops. He bends down and writes in the dust. While others stand over the woman in judgment, Jesus lowers himself to the ground.

Whatever he writes, the posture itself speaks. God, in the flesh, meets a shamed and exposed human being not from above, but from below. He does not tower over her failure. He stoops into it.

This downward movement runs through the entire biblical story. From the beginning, God forms humanity from the dust, from down where hands are in the soil. Later, God hears the cries of enslaved people and comes down to deliver them. In Jesus, this movement reaches its clearest expression. The incarnation is God stooping fully into human life, into hunger and fatigue, misunderstanding and rejection, suffering and death.

Jesus stoops to touch lepers. He kneels to wash feet. He bends to welcome children. Again and again, God crosses the boundaries that power normally protects.

Ash Wednesday places us in that same space. Marked with ashes, we are reminded that we are not self-made, self-sustaining, or self-saving. We are dust, and we are loved. Not loved once we attain, but loved because we exist.

And this movement does not end with the Cross or the empty tomb. The final vision of the Bible does not picture humanity escaping earth to go to God. It pictures God stooping to dwell with humanity. "See, the dwelling of God is with humans." The story ends where it has always been headed: God descending, God dwelling, God near.

From Genesis to Revelation, the rhythm remains the same. God comes to us. God stoops.

Lent, then, is not a season of climbing upward, but of honest descent. It invites us to loosen our grip, to stop pretending, to allow God to meet us where we actually are, close to the ground.

Perhaps then, to be human is not about striving after God who is up there but rather about discovering that God has already come to us.

This Lent, guided by Jesus' words, "my kingdom is not of this world," we will explore the quiet, unsettling power of a kingdom that stoops instead of conquers.