

Instead of Ashes
Isaiah 61:1-11, Luke 4:14-21
September 2, 2018

- On Monday a fire destroyed a place I love and left it in ashes.
 - Smoke
 - Flames
 - Back porch 1 where we had classes.
 - Back porch 2 People prayed for my healing.
 - Inside
- There are ashes in my life. Our lives.
- Ashes of grief, broken relationships, disappointment, moral failure, sickness, poverty
- The ashes of bitter division in our nation.

- So what does God do with the ashes in our lives?
 - (Not everything was destroyed by the fire.)
 - Mantle where important, symbolic keepsakes were displayed to remind us of ways God has blessed us. (Menorah & shophar, Plaque, Chalices, Rock)
 - Symbols of God's promises survived the flames.
 - Bible not burned. Word of God endured.

1. God gives us a crown of beauty instead of ashes.
Isaiah 61:3 ***and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.***

- Ashes are the result of destruction. Charred remains, perhaps of something valuable.
- Sackcloth and ashes was a customary way to express mourning and humiliation.
- Crown of beauty = garland. Royalty. Victory.

■ God replaces our mourning with joy and our humiliation with victory.

2. We see this happen repeatedly in the Bible.

■ This passage was addressed to God's people in a time of calamity. (During Exile?)

■ Joseph

Genesis 41:14, 41 ***So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. ...***

41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

■ Egypt 400 years

Exodus 3:7-8a ***The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey."***

■ David

■ Psalms of Lament

Psalms 40:2-3 ***He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. 3 He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.***

■ Remember Jesus' first miracle.

John 2:9-10 ***and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have***

had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

- The point is not just that he can change the chemical composition of H₂O, but that He transforms the dull, the drab, the ordinary into the exquisite.
- He gives beauty for ashes and turns water into wine.

3. We see it happen often in our lives.

- I've walked through the ashes with many of you.
 - Sickness → healing.
 - Trouble in marriage or family.
 - Devastating loss of a loved one.
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- It's almost a Christian cliché.
 - Write down an incident where God has given you beauty for ashes.
 - Then thank God for that.
- Some are still in the ashes and waiting for the crown of beauty.
 - Write down a place where you need God to bring you up from the ashes.
 - Ask Him and trust Him to do so.
- (Chief Warrant Officer Taylor Gavin – Brother in law of Andrew Rucker, who is the son-in-law of Clifton and Jean Sackaloo – died in a helicopter crash in Iraq last Sunday night.
- Hut on fire. Smoke signal

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

4. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Luke 4:21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

- He healed people, cast out demons, working miracles, teaching truth etc.
- He still heals. He still works miracles. He still teaches us truth.
- It is He who gives you a crown of beauty instead of ashes.
- He is the best example!
- GOSPEL

5. This promise will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Luke 22:14-15 ***And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”***

Isaiah 25:6-8 ***On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine— the best of meats and the finest of wines. 7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.***

Revelation 7:17 ***For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.’ ‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”***