

“Crosses On My Forehead”

Ash Wednesday

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By Rebecca Enney

Barabas forgot it was Ash Wednesday today. That is until Uncle Floyd told him to get ready for church as soon as supper was finished.

Ash Wednesday is the day that the pastor puts ashes in the shape of a cross on your forehead. That black cross represents our sinfulness.

Barabas understands his own sinfulness. He knows there are times when he has lied. He knows there are times when he is not kind to others. Barabas has not told me all the bad things he has done. He doesn't need too. I understand because I too have done bad things. I suspect we all have. This is part of the nature of who we are. We are a people who have fallen short of what God has wanted for us.

And so it is that Barabas stood in line with Uncle Floyd and all the others, to receive that black cross on his forehead.

When Pastor Ed said the words “From dust you were made and to dust you shall return,” Barabas earnestly repented his unkind deeds. God sees all that we are, the good parts AND the bad parts and the secret parts.

After he got back to his seat, Barabas thought about the ashes on his forehead. He wondered what they looked like. He pictured seeing the mark on his face in the mirror at home when he washed up at bedtime. He knew the ashes would make a black mark on his washcloth.

And then Barabas thought about that other cross, the one that Pastor Ed marked on his forehead on the day when he was baptized. He couldn't remember that day, because he was a baby then, but Mrs. Potato Head has told him about it.

That cross, from his baptism, was made with oil, not ashes, and the oil was invisible. At least, it is invisible to us. The cross from his baptism remains there, visible only to God. It can't be washed off.

“That's interesting” thought Barabas. He pondered the crosses on his forehead. The cross of black ashes, the one that shows our sins, gets washed away and forgotten, even by God. Because, you see, God sent Jesus to wash away our sins.

It is the invisible cross, the one we received when we were baptized, the one seen only by God, that does not get washed away. That cross stays with us for life. THAT cross is God's mark of our salvation.

So after church tonight, when you get home and see the ashes on your forehead, remember that God has promised through his Son Jesus, to forget that mark. And remember that God will always see the invisible cross from your baptism.

“Crosses on My Forehead” thought Barabas. THE END