

**Ash Wednesday**  
**14/2/2018**

**Mark the Evangelist**

**Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

**Psalm 51**

**Matthew 6:1-6, 16-20**

**Light for the dark**

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Over the next six weeks we take time to reflect on “treasure,” the theme of our reading from Matthew this evening.

Our readings thought Lent will take us through the unfolding of the covenant of God with Israel, and this we will hear in the context of Jesus’ ministry of engagement with Israel, fulfilling and renewing that covenant.

It is a story of love and conflict, of confusion and re-orientation. But it is not simply a story of to-and-fro; it *goes* somewhere. The scriptural story is an unfolding revelation, an account of gradually dawning light.

We gather this evening to mark the beginning of this process as a beginning in darkness, symbolised in the imposition of ash. We are from dust, and we return to dust, and there is no treasure to be had along the way which will endure. All that is earthly goes the way of all the earth. This ancient sign of the ashes speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of a people prone to treasure the wrong things.

But the gospel is also that there is light – a treasure which shines in the dark and will not be overcome by it. The light illuminates, and calls forth, and makes clear the path which leads not to more dust but to life.

Our repentance, then, anticipates God’s forgiveness – our recognition of our breaking of the covenant takes place in the light of its renewal.

With this in mind, let us make our confession...

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