

Series: Advent Love

Sunday, December 21.

1. FROM ASHES TO B.....

(Isaiah 61:3,10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; See also Lamentations 3:16)

- The exiles sat in the ashes of grief, loss, and devastation. God promised them a crown of beauty instead.
- Jesus, the Prince of Heaven, clothed Himself in our filthy rags of sin at the cross and wore them so we wouldn't have to. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through His resurrection, He clothes us with His beauty and righteousness. The manger begins this exchange; the cross completes it.
- What "ashes" in your life—what grief, loss, or devastation—do you need to bring before God's transforming love?

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2. FROM SHAME TO I

(Isaiah 61:7; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 5:20; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 1:3-4)

- The exiles faced crushing shame—their sins, a ruined city and mockery from nations. Like us, they were "by nature deserving of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). But God's love exchanges shame for inheritance. Christ was born into our shame and at the cross took our shame upon Himself, "scorning its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Instead of judgment, we receive "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade...kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). God doesn't just forgive our shame—He gives us a double portion of blessing and everlasting joy.
- What shame or disgrace are you tempted to believe disqualifies you from God's love and inheritance?

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3. FROM DESPAIR TO PRAISE

(Isaiah 61:3; see also Romans 13:14)

- The exiles wore "a faint spirit"—crushing despair, hopelessness, and mourning. God promised them not just relief but transformation: "a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." They would become "oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."
- As we consider God's Great Exchange of Love for us, we are not only crowned with beauty, and robed with salvation and righteousness, but we can also put on the garment of praise. Indeed, may we become solid oaks of righteousness, for the display of God's glory and splendor!
- How has God's love transformed an area of despair in your life into a place of praise?

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Application For This Week: As you celebrate Christmas this week, remember that Jesus covered Himself with the ashes of humanity in the manger and wore our sin and shame at the cross so we don't need to hold onto them any longer. Each day, reflect on one aspect of the Great Exchange and thank God for what He has given you in Christ. On Christmas Day, may you delight greatly in the Lord! Let your soul rejoice in God your Savior, for He has clothed you with garments of salvation and arrayed you in a robe of His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, thank You for the Great Exchange! You took our ashes and gave us beauty; You removed our shame and gave us an inheritance; and You lifted our despair and gave us tongues of praise. Help us live in the joy of what You have done both through the manger, and at the cross. May our lives display Your splendor. Amen."

Verses To Meditate On This Week:

"[To] bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes ... and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." - Isaiah 61:3

"I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness" – Isaiah 61:10

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