

February 22, 2023 – Ash Wednesday

## **Here I Am**

[Isaiah 58:1-12](#)

*Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and He will say  
“Here I am.” (Isaiah 58:9)*

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten season. A time to prepare our hearts for the days that are to come. Days of grief, days of sadness, and days of confusion until Easter Sunday. Then we experience a time of rejoicing over our new lives.

In John Wesley’s take on this scripture, he suggests that it addresses “the danger of making our pious practice into works of merit, trying to establish our own righteousness.” I suppose you could say, as did the Prophet Isaiah, that the people pretended to practice righteousness. Now that happened in the days of Isaiah, not in our days. Right? It was that generation that had a false worship, a nation that professed to follow God’s law but really lived to please themselves. They had a *form* of religion and not the true religion.

In our scripture Isaiah addresses the idea of fasting. During the Lenten season we often talk of what we will give up for Lent (not chocolate). God would much rather have our obedience and justice and righteousness more than He wants our fasting. If we are to give up something, let us give up our faithless living.

As we prepare our hearts for this season of Lent, let us remember that God is all knowing and all seeing. He sees us in our darkest places and knows our every action. Let us spend this period of Lent being the people God calls us to be by doing His work in a troubled world. God offers us forgiveness and healing for a life lived in a false form of religion. He calls us to free the oppressed, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless.

When we do these things, God will hear when we call on Him for help. He will answer “Here I Am.” During this season of Lent, those are the words we all want to hear.

***Prayer:*** *Dear God, during this time of Lent, help us to be aware of the issues of social justice in a world that seems turned upside down. Help us to care for others in the spirit and the love that you care for us. Thank you for being near when we need help and for answering Here I Am. May we answer the same way when you call us. Amen*

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