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I'm you're like me - your mind turns to the image of dust that lurks nooks and crannies around our home. Or on the ceiling fan in your bedroom and you see it each night and think, "I'm gonna clean that tomorrow. Promise."

We see dust as something to sweep up, sweep away.

And yet for our God, the Holy One, dust is just the beginning.

It feels like an ending though doesn't it? When our lives feel dusty and dry it is often a season where our world feels like it is falling apart, broken or stuck. And our gut instinct is to sweep it away hoping that our most vigorous cleaning will clear the dustiness of our lives opting not to reveal that dust to God or another but try on our own to expunge it from our life. .

But do you know what the Holy One can do with us?

The Holy One can breathe life into it.

In the very beginning there was merely dust, dry, lifeless, without purpose - and our God, creator of the universe scooped it up and breathed.

Breathed deeply giving life to this pile of ashes. Giving life to these specks of broken pieces.

That's what the Holy One can do with ashes.

Simply remarkable.

So we come and we receive them again today. Say God, "We aren't running or sweeping away our dust" but putting on our forehead to the world to see because we know you can be trusted with it. This ash isn't a sign of defeat but of surrender. A sign that we know that you, Oh Holy One, can do remarkable things with ashes.

And really Lent is a journey in which we re-center and create space for God to breathe life into our ashes. Lent is a 40 day discipline of saying to God - breathe into us that culminates in the greatest celebration of new life Easter Sunday.

It's why for centuries people have given up things for Lenten. Not because they want to loose weight by dropping the chocolate or give up Diet Coke to try to curb the caffeine addiction. Believers have practiced fasting throughout Lent as a way of removing that which hinders the breathe of God from moving through our dust and bringing about new life.

More recently people have moved to adding -- adding practices like daily devotions these 40 days that are places for God to speak outside of our regular routine, our daily dustiness.

So that's the question today - where is your dust pile? Where is that place you need God to breathe?

A commentator I read this week said, "What if this Lent we didn't approach the practices of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting with an eye to what we can do to transform ourselves, but rather with an eye to what God wants to do in order to transform us?"

That's it. Lent isn't about what you can - how disciplined you are. It is about saying to God again -I'm a dust pile, but Holy One I know what you can do with dust. What does God want to do with your dust? How will those seemingly drive and dusty places have purpose because of the move of God in your life this Lent?

Precious Lord,

Our world is a wilderness of dust and ash. The flames of poverty consume. Deserts engulf forests and grasslands. Drought, famine and food shortages blow through an ever more hopeless world.

Yet amid the ashes and dust, we know that you are there. Your rod and staff comfort us in death's valley. For forty days you fasted in the wilderness. As you faced death, you, too, felt the pain of thirst.

It is out of death that you conquered death. Out of hopelessness, you bring eternal hope. Out of dust, you breathe new life. On this day, Lord, drown us in the waters of your compassion. Fill us with the daily bread of your promise. Give us eyes to see our dusty neighbors and remind us of the dust from where we came, and the grace-filled dust where we will one day return. You are one who was, who is and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.