

1st Wednesday – Real Religion

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Fat Tuesday – Ash Wednesday

- **CARNIVAL** – from the Latin *carne vale*, “Farewell to the flesh.”
- People “indulge their flesh” with the hope of entering into a 6-week period of time of suffering, with the hope of storing up enough “sin or fun” to last through the period of “serving God.”
- This suffering is when you **serve God**.
- After the suffering is over, you can go back to your everyday life.
- Is it any wonder people don’t want to **walk with God** in everyday life?
- The difference between religion and being a follower of Jesus is that religion makes serving God a season and living outside of a walk with God, everyday life; when following Jesus makes living for God an “everyday life event” and sees living outside of that relationship as a season to be avoided.

Matthew 11:25-30 ⁻²⁶ Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: “Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You’ve concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that’s the way you like to work.” ²⁷ Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. “The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, **coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge**. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I’m not keeping it to myself; I’m ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen. ²⁸⁻³⁰ “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” **The Message**

- Religion is full of people, all in an inescapable pit judging each other about rules for pit dwelling.
- Jesus is about emptying the pit!
- What are you “GIVING UP FOR LENT”?
- The principle is noble and can be with the intent to honor God, but will produce the exact opposite of the intention.

Matthew 23:13-15 - “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. ¹⁵ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees,

you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. **NIV**

Matthew 23:23-30 – ²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. **These you ought to have done**, without leaving the others undone. ²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! ²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed **appear** beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly **appear** righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, **NKJV**

Matthew 23:33 - Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? **NKJV**

Matthew 23:37 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! **NKJV**

- All attempts at self-righteousness take us out from under the care of God.
- You can't earn this!
- We must have a "zeal" toward His righteousness.

Romans 10:1-4 – ¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ² For I bear them record that they have a **zeal of God**, but **not according to knowledge**. ³ For they **being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God**. ⁴ **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes**.

- **Zeal** – fervent or enthusiastic devotion
- To truly submit to the Righteousness of God, you must abandon establishing your own.