

Cast Your Burdens Upon the Lord

Psalm 55

Ash Wednesday — February 18, 2026

Pastor Trent Eastman | New Baptist Church, Huntington, WV

The Beginning of Lent

Tonight is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent — forty days of preparation before Easter. Lent has historically been a season of repentance, a time to hear again the ancient call: *Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand*. Over the years, that call has been softened in much of our culture into something far smaller: giving something up for forty days. And while there's nothing wrong with fasting, that was never the heart of the season. Lent is about repentance. It is about returning.

Every Ash Wednesday I try to focus on something specific — repentance, bondage, the things we cling to that we ought to surrender. Tonight I want to focus on burdens. And the text I want to bring us to is Psalm 55, a psalm of David.

Psalm 55: A Cry from the Middle of the Storm

The psalm opens with David crying out to God in raw, unfiltered prayer:

Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me. — Psalm 55:1–3

He is not composed. He is not at peace. He is moaning. And then he describes what this burden is doing inside him:

My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. And I say, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest.” — Psalm 55:4–8

In other words: if I could, I would run. He would flee the whole situation entirely. But he cannot run away, so he brings it to God — and what follows is a striking passage of lament and accusation:

Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around it on its walls, and iniquity and trouble are within it; ruin is in its midst; oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace. For it is not an enemy who taunts me — then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me — then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng. — Psalm 55:9–14

David has been betrayed. Not by a stranger — by a friend, a companion, someone with whom he once walked to the house of God. There is a particular weight to that kind of wound, and David does not pretend otherwise. In this place of deep pain and hurt, he cries out for judgment:

Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart. — Psalm 55:15

And then something shifts. David turns from his accusation toward the Lord and remembers His promises:

But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. — Psalm 55:16–18

Notice that David does not pray once and move on. Evening and morning and at noon. This is not a one-time surrender — it is a repeated returning, a discipline of releasing what he keeps wanting to take back.

God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, because they do not change and do not fear God. My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. — Psalm 55:19–21

In other words, David is trusting God to deal with this person who is causing him such pain. He is releasing the outcome. And having released it, he turns to instruct us — the reader — and speaks one of the great commands of the Psalter:

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you. — Psalm 55:22–23

Notice the dual casting in these final verses. You cast your burden on the LORD — and then God casts them down. There is a transfer happening. What crushes you, God will crush. What bears down on you, God will bear away. Your job is to release it. His job is to deal with it.

The Burdens We Carry

David's burden here is clearly a friend who betrayed him and caused him both great harm and great pain. But there are many other burdens, and I suspect you carried one into this room tonight. Let me name some of them, and let me name the promise God has given for each one.

Grief and loss. *“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”* (Psalm 34:18)

Anxiety and fear. *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6–7)

Guilt, shame, and the weight of sin. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

Illness or chronic pain. *“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Loneliness. *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* (Hebrews 13:5)

Financial pressure. *“Do not be anxious... your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* (Matthew 6:31–33)

Burnout and exhaustion. *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

Trauma and deep wounds. *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”* (Psalm 147:3)

Uncertainty and hard decisions. *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”* (Proverbs 3:5–6)

Relationship strain and family conflict. *“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”* (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Doubt and spiritual dryness. *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”* (Romans 8:26–27)

Injustice and unresolved wrong. *“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”* (Romans 12:19)

Burden for a loved one. *“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 19:14)

The future and your direction. *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”* (Jeremiah 29:11)

I don’t know which of these you carried in tonight. But I am fairly certain you carried one. David is not speaking from a calm and comfortable life — he is speaking from betrayal, anguish, and fear. And right in the middle of that storm, he gives us this command and this promise: *Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.* Every word of that verse matters.

“Cast”

This is a violent word. It means to throw, to hurl, to fling away from yourself with force. This is not “gently hand over your concerns to Jesus” language. This is not “politely mention your problems in prayer.” This is: take the burden that is crushing you and throw it.

Picture David — betrayed, wounded, surrounded by enemies, his heart in anguish (v. 4), terror falling on him (v. 5), wanting to fly away like a dove just to escape (v. 6). He is not calmly placing his burden before the Lord. He is hurling it. He is refusing to keep ownership of what is destroying him. “I cannot carry this one more step. God — here. You take it.”

“...on the LORD”

Notice where the instruction says to cast it. Not onto a technique. Not onto a coping mechanism. Not onto someone else’s advice. On the LORD. To cast your burden on the Lord is to say: *You are strong enough. You are wise enough. You are near enough. You care enough.*

“...and he will sustain you”

The Hebrew word here is *kalkol* — to support, to uphold, to provide for, to nourish. It is the word used in Genesis 45:11 when Joseph says, “I will provide for you there” — literally, *I will sustain you through the famine.*

Notice what the word is not. It is not “fix.” It is not “remove.” It is not “solve.” God does not promise to make the burden disappear the moment you cast it on him. What he promises is this: he will hold you up under it. He will carry you through it. He will provide what you need to keep walking, keep obeying, keep believing — without collapsing under the weight.

Sometimes — yes, sometimes — God changes the circumstances. The prodigal comes home. The cancer goes into remission. The job comes through. The relationship is restored. But often — perhaps more often — God does not change the circumstances. He changes you. He changes your capacity. He strengthens you to endure what you could not endure before. He meets you in the famine and sustains you through it, day by day, manna by manna, grace by grace.

So if you cast your burden on the Lord tonight and wake up tomorrow and the burden is still there — that does not mean God didn’t hear you. It means he is sustaining you in it, not just out of it. And that enduring grace, that supernatural capacity to keep going when everything in you says quit — that is the miracle.

“He will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

“Never moved” does not mean never shaken. David is shaking in verses 1 through 8. It means God will not allow his people to be toppled, defeated, or ultimately destroyed. Even in this, his grace and his strength are sufficient.

A Lenten Invitation

So tonight, on this Ash Wednesday, I want to invite you to cast your burden upon the Lord. Not tomorrow. Not when you feel more spiritual. Not when you’ve tried everything else. Now. Tonight. Throw it. Hurl it. Refuse to keep carrying what is crushing you.

He is strong enough. He is wise enough. He is near enough. He cares enough.

And he will sustain you.

The card inside your bulletin contains a simple prayer template for casting your burdens upon the Lord, and my hope is that you will keep it near you through the days of Lent. My Lenten challenge to you is to make this a practice — perhaps even three times a day, just as David prayed: *evening and morning and at noon*.

The prayer follows a simple movement: name your burden before the Lord, telling him exactly what is weighing you down. Then cast it — pray, “Lord, I place this in your hands. I release control and trust you with the outcome.” Then ask him for what you need to take the next step: strength, wisdom, peace, provision. Ask what is yours to do, and do it. And when you find yourself dwelling on the burden again — because you will — return. Remember his promises, and cast it once more.

We are going to walk through that prayer together now, and then I want to invite you to come forward to receive ashes as a sign of your mortality, your humility, and your trust in the God who holds what you cannot.

“Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” — Psalm 55:22