

I will wait

By [Ryan Dueck](#)

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Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent, the day when ashes are placed on foreheads, and the words “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” are proclaimed. For whatever reason, throughout my life, I have rarely needed this reminder.

The precarious and fragile nature of human life has always been very apparent to me, even as a boy. For as long as I can remember, I have wondered and worried about aging and disease and gradually fading into disutility, irrelevance, and decay.

For as long as I can remember, I have hated this prospect. Sometimes, in my more grimly perverse moments, I find myself thinking of my life as the little bar on the bottom of a video or a song that shows you how much time has elapsed and how much is still to come. “How many minutes are left in the song?” I wonder. I have always had an acute awareness that my days are numbered—that all good things come to an end, that nothing important is permanent, that the things we most hunger for as human beings are destined to elude us here.

So Lent is here and I am supposed be reminded of my mortality, and, according to the lovely [Christian Seasons calendar](#) hanging on my wall, “to draw closer to Jesus, who leads us through death to life.” Very well, I can do this and I *will* do this. I will do my best to discipline my appetites, to reflect upon Christ’s passion, to dwell in the narratives of the Gospels, to celebrate each Sunday foretaste of the resurrection that is coming on Easter Sunday. I will prepare for the holiest, most joyful, and desperately necessary time of the Christian year. I will wait.

But I am also already looking ahead—*a/ways* looking ahead—in the story, like a little kid trying to sneak a peak

over a fence that's just a bit too high. Because unless there's something good on the other side, I could, quite frankly, do without the mortality reminder, without the discipline and patience, without the dwelling with Jesus in the emptiness and the darkness of a broken world. Without the ashes.

I know that participating in the liturgical year is supposed to shape me as a follower of Jesus. I know that I am supposed to embrace it as one of the ways in which a patiently hopeful and disciplined character is formed, and virtue is cultivated, but today I'm not feeling particularly virtuous or disciplined or patient. Today, I'm in the mood for some victory. Today, I want to be reminded that this Jesus I am (sometimes impatiently) dwelling with, this crucified Jew whom the grave could not contain all those years ago *is* saving and *will*

save me from my sin and stupidity, my indiscipline, my lack of gratitude, my limp commitment, and inadequate hope. I want to be pointed again—now!—toward the relentless divine reach that promises to finally save the world still reeling under the weight of sin and evil, all these years after Jesus walked the earth.

Perhaps I am just the kind of person in just the kind of mood that Lent is for. Perhaps it is precisely for impatient and demanding people like me, who clamor too quickly for resurrection, that a forty day season of preparation and reflection is appropriate.

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