



Links Players

Out of the Ashes

And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in burlap and ashes. (Esther 4:3, NLT)

The headline on the cover of the USGA magazine grabbed my attention. It simply said *From the Ashes*.

The subheader read, "After a devastating clubhouse fire, Oakland Hills Country Club vows to return even stronger."

The fire started on February 17, 2022, and ultimately destroyed the 100-year-old clubhouse. It was about 100,000 square feet and housed one of the great collections of golf history.

On the cover was a picture of the club's president holding a U.S. Open trophy, the remains of which was the second largest wooden structure in Michigan behind him.

It took four days, 8 million gallons of water, and more than 100 firefighters before the last hot spot was put out. Nothing much was left but ashes.

As Newsweek said, the golf world was in mourning.

In the Bible, ashes are closely associated with mourning, so Newsweek got it right, perhaps unknowingly.

The verse above is a great example. A plan had been devised by an evil man to kill all of the Jews in King Ahsuerus' empire. When that plan was revealed to Mordecai, guardian of Queen Esther, he put on sackcloth and sat in ashes as a sign of mourning.

When word spread, other Jews responded in like manner.

Sackcloth (burlap) and ashes were used as an outward sign of a person's inward condition. One of the beautiful things about this display was it allowed everyone to see the change in someone's heart.

We've all known people who have dressed up brightly because they were happy or in black to indicate a time of sorrow or mourning.

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Like the Oakland Hills Clubhouse, we can rise from the ashes and return even stronger. But we cannot do it on our own, but only through God.

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Seldom, if ever, have we seen such a dramatic and sincere outward sign as sackcloth and ashes.

But it is not the sackcloth nor the ashes that moves God; it is the inward person. He himself said that “Man looks on the outward appearance” but that he looks inside (1 Samuel 16:7).

And it is God who can take us out of our mourning, out of the humility that causes us to clothe ourselves in sackcloth and sit in ashes.

Like the Oakland Hills Clubhouse, we can rise from the ashes and return even stronger. But we cannot do it on our own, but only through God.

As David wrote in Psalm 30:11 (ESV), "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."

May we humble ourselves before God, and may he turn our mourning into dancing.

Prayer: Father, look on our hearts and see how we have given up ourselves. Remove our sackcloth and clothe us with gladness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Lewis Greer

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