

March 10, 2021 Mid-week Monthly Service – Lent 3

Prelude

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING/ CALL TO WORSHIP

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people

We gather as one,

Blessed by God's wisdom,

We gather to learn

Amazed by God's love,

We gather to worship.

COME LET US WORSHIP



of God.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Trusting in God's promise of salvation,
let us confess our sin and repent.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God,

we confess that we have not been sincere Christians.

We claim to follow Jesus

but have not taken his path of sacrificial love.

We profess to be disciples,

but we are not willing to bear the cost of discipleship.

We affirm the virtue of self-denial,

but we indulge our selfish desires and seek earthly gain.

Forgive us, we pray.

Free us for sincere repentance

through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news:

God deems as righteous all who trust that Jesus
has been raised from the dead for our salvation.

In the name of Jesus Christ,
you are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG - ELW #324 - "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and forever. Amen

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Exodus 20:1-17

A reading from Exodus.

¹God spoke all these words: ²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. ⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. ¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder. ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your

neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION – *Recited by All*
Return to the Lord, your God,
For he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

GOSPEL: John 2:13-22

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON - God's Love Is Not for Sale

Holy Spirit, open our hearts to receive your Word, reveal to us the good news, and enable us to trust in the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's a jarring image: A violent Jesus, physically casting away people abusing the Church He loves and protects.

Jesus grabbing a whip and throwing people out of the temple who were using it for profit is a powerful image because Jesus preached peace-making, not fighting. He preached patience and gentleness, not anger and violence. If He was getting *that* angry, it was clear that an extremely grave offense was being committed. The kind of behavior Jesus displayed in the temple that afternoon isn't forbidden, but it wasn't exactly a daily part of Jesus' life, either.

So it was a **bad** day at the Temple for those livestock sellers and money changers. Such activity was forbidden in the temple but the authorities who were present were clearly looking the other way! The high priest received a percentage of the profit from the money changers and merchants, so their removal from the Temple would have caused a financial loss to him. Because pilgrims were not familiar with Jerusalem, the Temple merchants sold sacrificial animals at a higher price than elsewhere in the city. The high priest overlooked their dishonesty, as long as he got his share.

So the scene we are looking at, is merchants and live animals, birds in cages, money exchanging hands, maybe merchants gouging innocent worshippers from out of town. It would have been noisy like any marketplace and very stinky from the animals, yet this marketplace on the entrance to the temple would have been the only place Gentiles could worship.

Bible scholars think this incident happened at Solomon's Porch, the outermost part on the east side of the Temple. Archaeologists have found a Greek inscription dated to 20 B.C. from the Court of the Gentiles, which warns non-Jews not to go any further into the Temple, on fear of death.

The moneychangers were making it hard for common people to worship God. The outer court was full of bleating lambs and sellers hawking their wares and people exchanging money.

No one was focused on God.

Beside his anger at the money changers' greed, Jesus hated the noise and commotion in the court, which would have made it impossible for devout Gentiles to pray there.

We may not have shady characters collecting temple taxes outside our churches in modern times, but we do have them invading our homes through radio, television and the internet. I must get three phone calls a week, telling me that my taxes are in arrears and the police are coming to arrest me because there was illegal activity on my tax return. Please do not fall for these thieves.

We are best to respond as Jesus did to such selfish swindlers. With no apologies, he drove them out of His Father's house. When we identify a modern money changer, we should do the same, not to give them any power over our lives.

Jesus cleansed the Temple because sinful activities interfered with worship.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus Christ was ushering in a new covenant with humanity, in which animal sacrifice would end, replaced by the perfect sacrifice of his life on the cross, atoning for human sin once and for all.

"When Jesus said he could build the temple in three days, he was trying to get people to recognize the kingdom of God was within him and to believe in him,"

Jesus spoke of his body as the temple. The three days he mentioned referred to his resurrection on the third day. Jesus was the reality to which the temple pointed.

When Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure, he assured them that when he ascended back to the Father that his followers would accomplish greater works than he was able to do. Jesus was able to say this because God is no longer confined to the temple or the church building. Jesus, the kingdom of God, has come and is moving through each and every one of us. We live each day expectantly. Just maybe we need to cleanse our hearts of attitude that are coming between us and God.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Today, God doesn't dwell in buildings, but in the hearts of his people. When we come to worship God, we must put aside all distractions and agendas. Jesus wants his people to experience the joy and peace of undistracted devotion. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY – ELW #772 – “*Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways*”

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your church, that in every situation your people's words and actions honor your name. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The heavens declare your glory. Renew your creation. Provide leaders in the struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to repent when our way of life pollutes the earth and skies. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness of your peace and mercy. Your law defends the vulnerable. Work through legislators, judicial systems, and systems of law enforcement to protect the wellbeing and freedom of all (we pray for the governments of Canada, the USA, the European Union, China and Myanmar. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your weakness is stronger than human strength. Protect those who are vulnerable and give courage to all who are suffering; especially, Florence, Jason, Harold, Richard, Robert, Dorian, Sharon, Albert. Defend victims of crime and bring redemption to those who have harmed others. Give sabbath rest to all who labor. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You call us to proclaim Christ crucified. Give clarity to this congregation and our leaders, so that we might follow Christ beyond our own habits and comfort. Clear out anything in our common life that would obscure the gospel or that serves our own interests. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The cross of Christ is your power for all who are being saved. Thank you for (*Perpetua, Felicity, and*) all the martyrs whose witness reveals the power of the cross. Give us the same trust in life and in death. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The house of God is not a marketplace for buying and selling. It is a house of prayer, a place of healing and restoration, a place where we bring before God our provisions to be used for present needs.

Let us bring our tithes and offerings to God. (John 2:16)

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

May the gifts we bring be gifts of love.

May the offerings we share be offerings of our hearts.

May each gift be blessed by your grace,

that others may know the truth of our wisdom and your love. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Jesus draws the whole world to himself.
Come to this meal and be fed.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. ALL

**Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven.
Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for
justice;
our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful
hearts,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.**

Blessing

God of silent creation,
Son of healing touch,
Spirit of desert-leading,
Bless our Lenten journey. † Amen

SENDING SONG - ELW #806 – “O God, My Faithful God”

DISMISSAL

In the Lenten SEASON, find time
and space to listen for God’s glory
as it is spoken in the world around you.
Go in peace. Remember the poor.
Thanks be to God.

Postlude

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Lent is sort of a spring cleaning for the soul. It’s a season when God wants us to examine ourselves and meditate on Him, His Word and His plan for our lives.

During these weeks leading up to Easter and ponder these questions during your moments of prayer.

1. Am I spending enough time studying His Word and praying?

2. Do I have a thankful heart, or am I constantly complaining about situations and people in my life?
3. What are the lurking sin problems that still tempt me?
4. Do I speak up for the less fortunate, or do I remain silent and inactive?
5. Do I stand up for my Christian beliefs, or do I compromise my faith in order to be politically correct?
6. Do I look for the best in others, or do I have a judgmental attitude?