

March 7<sup>th</sup> Worship  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

### Introduction to the Day

The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The commandments begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and profit-making can become our gods. The Ten Commandments are essential to our baptismal call: centered first in God's liberating love, we strive to live out justice and mercy in our communities and the world.

### Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
the keeper of the covenant,  
the source of steadfast love,  
our rock and our redeemer.

**Amen.**

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in  
Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of  
compassion.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Fountain of living water,  
**pour out your mercy over us.**  
**Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.**  
**Rebuild what we have ruined**  
**and mend what we have torn.**

**Wash us in your cleansing flood.**  
**Make us alive in the Spirit**  
**to follow in the way of Jesus,**  
**as healers and restorers of the world you so love.**

**Amen.**

Beloved, God's word never fails.

The promise rests on grace:

by the saving love of Jesus Christ,

the wisdom and power of God,

your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them  
no more.

Journey in the way of Jesus.

**Amen.**

### Prayer of the Day

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 Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### Lesson – Exodus 20:1-17

<sup>1</sup>God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup>you shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup>You 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. <sup>5</sup>You 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, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup>But 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. <sup>11</sup>For 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.

<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>You 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.

## **Gospel – John 2:13-22**

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

## **Message**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

I know I've shared this before, but this gospel text is one of my favorite gospel texts. In this text we see Jesus display a truly human trait. On the surface we see Jesus display perhaps one of the most relatable traits we can think of...anger.

I think we can all think of a time when we have been "flip tables over" angry and can relate to that feeling that Jesus has when he enters the temple and there are money changers. And this place of worship, ritual, and tradition has been turned into a marketplace.

The picture that is painted here for us is one of chaos. "He came into the temple and there were people selling cattle and sheep and doves. And money changers seated at their tables." He makes a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple, "both the sheep and the cattle. He poured out the coins of the money changers. Told those who were selling doves to take them out of here." And you imagine this scene with cattle and sheep and doves and coins flying.

And amid this chaos - amid this overturning of this temple scene - is Jesus.

Now, in John's gospel, we are told who Jesus is. We are in John chapter two so it wasn't long ago in John Chapter One that we hear, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us." The Word is Jesus. And, amid this chaotic scene we have God made flesh. In human form. With cattle and sheep and doves and coins flying everywhere.

"You have made my Father's house a marketplace."

Jesus as God's presence - His anger is God's anger - For what this place of worship, what this time of ritual, and what this time of tradition has become and what, what this time of ritual and this time of tradition has become.

We know that God was in the beginning. We hear those words. We know our creation narratives. We know those stories that we've heard. We know that God was in the beginning. And, that in the beginning, God breathed life into the nothingness, into the chaotic formless void God made creation. And, in this story, we find God in human form, standing in the midst of chaos and anger.

In that moment he challenges those people who are upset about what he's done. He challenges them. He says, "you will destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it again." They are thinking of the physical structure. They are thinking of that physical place that this ritual, this tradition for the Jewish people, the Passover, where that takes place. This is what they are thinking about when Jesus says "destroy this temple and I will rise again in three days."

"It took 46 years to build this place, and you're going to rebuild it in three days? Are you crazy? And this is the second time this temple's been rebuilt. You think you are going to rebuild it again in three days?"

We, as 21st century people of faith, have the luxury of knowing. We have the luxury of reading these stories and not just listening and/or experiencing them as Jesus is creating this chaotic scene. We have the luxury, as 21st century people of faith, of knowing that he's not talking about the temple as a structure.

But, he is talking about the temple, that place, where God resides, as his body. His physical self is the temple. He speaks of his physical self as the place where God abides, where God makes a dwelling, and he knows they will destroy it.

And he knows he will rise again in three days.

The people who experienced this moment, including his disciples, miss it. In the midst of the chaos, and undoing, and turmoil, and displeasure, they miss God's presence among them.

We know these things because we know John chapter one. We know our creation narratives that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And, when humans were created, we were created in God's image.

It was Fred Rogers who said, "in times of chaos and in times of turmoil and in times of feeling unsettled, look for the helpers."

So often when we are in those chaotic moments, we forget to look towards who is bringing us calm. Like the people in the temple scene that day, we are worried about what has been on done. We are worried about the structures and the things and the places that have, in our minds, been destroyed that we forget to look for God among us.

The disciples, in this Gospel text, and it says it plain as day, "after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered this experience. They remembered he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken."

Not until after he had died did they realize what Jesus was saying in this moment. They didn't have the luxury that we have. So what do we then do with this? What does it mean for them in their current moment of chaos, but also for us? What does it mean for us that they miss God's presence among them?

One, we do the same thing. We miss, so frequently, God's presence among us because we forget that "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. And the Word was God." But also, in the beginning, when human was created, it was created in God's image, meaning that - in those moments of chaos, our neighbor, those who come to help us, or those who cry for help, are God among us.

And, in failing to see that, in failing to realize, that that neighbor, that person bringing some calm to the chaos is God among us, we fail to see God present just as those people in the temple did.

Now, we could be like the disciples and not realize this until that day we die and go to whatever heaven is and see our neighbors in the image of God. We could absolutely wait until then.

Or, we could read it right now that the disciples may be telling us, "look, we didn't realize it until Jesus died and rose again, that this is what he was talking about. But you, people of faith, reading this in 2021, this is God's presence among you! The people bringing calm in the midst of chaos, and maybe it's you, are God's presence among you because YOU are created in God's image."

And just as Jesus was the calm in the midst of that chaos, we are called to be that calm, bringing wholeness to a situation that is anything but.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

## **Apostle's Creed**

### **Prayers**

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

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. 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. 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 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.**

## **Offering**

### **Offertory Prayer**

Faithful God,  
you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

#### **Blessing**

You are what God made you to be:  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
chosen as holy and beloved,  
freed to serve your neighbor.

God bless you ✠ that you may be a blessing,  
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

**Amen.**

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

### **A Communal Fast from the Sacrament of Holy Communion**

We will be taking a communal fast from the Sacrament of Holy Communion for the Season of Lent. The next time we will take communion as a community of faith will be on Maundy Thursday, when we remember the night in which Jesus first gave this meal.

### **Re-Connect Opportunities will be starting again THIS WEEK!**

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Wednesdays will continue to be our Faith Formation Days

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.