

**March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Third Sunday in Lent**

**Welcome and announcements.**

**Welcome to worship. March newsletters are out with details about in person worship and on-line worship in Lent and Holy Week. Masks continue to be mandatory, and registration is appreciated for in person worship.**

**We share Holy Communion today so you may desire to gather a piece of bread or cracker, wine, juice or water to receive the sacrament. Please join me this week on-line for the Lenten series “Created for Community”. This week’s theme is “Community with our Neighbors.”**

**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.**

**First Reading: Exodus 20:1-17**

***After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how-to live-in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.***

1 God spoke all these words:

2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;

3 you shall have no other gods before me.

4 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.

5 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,

6 but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 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.

8 Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

10 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.

11 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.

12 Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

13 You shall not murder.

14 You shall not commit adultery.

15 You shall not steal.

16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 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.

## **Psalm 19**

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims its maker's handiwork

**2 One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another.**

3 Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard,

**4 their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world, where God has pitched a tent for the sun.**

5 It comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber; it rejoices like a champion to run its course.

**6 It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again; nothing is hidden from its burning heat.**

7 The teaching of the Lord is perfect and re-vives the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.

**8 The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to the eyes.**

9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

**10 More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.**

11 By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.

**12 Who can detect one's own offenses? Cleanse me from my secret faults.**

13 Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me; then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offense.

**14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.**

## **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

*The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.*

18 The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.

22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom,

23 but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

## **The Holy Gospel according to: John 2:13-22    Glory to you O Lord**

*Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.*

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14 In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

15 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.

16 He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

22 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.

The word of the Lord.....**Praise to you O Christ**

### **Sermon**

Jewish pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem early in order to purify themselves for the Passover, the remembrance how God saved the Hebrews by allowing the angel of death to pass over them in Egypt. As Christians we do a similar purification ritual in Lent. To celebrate Jesus passing over from death to new life, we focus on our need for God to clean us up from our sins by rituals of fasting, giving and prayer.

Jesus travels to the temple in Jerusalem because of Passover just as others of the Hebrew faith did. When he arrives, he sees Merchants offering animals for sale to sacrifice. There are many kinds of offerings used by the ancient Jewish people but for the Passover offering of sin, blood offerings are the tradition. Bulls, lambs and goats for those with money and birds for those who are poor. Each animal was sacrificed by a priest in specific ways according to Levitical law.

Jesus also sees the moneychangers exchanging coins, and the pilgrims. The faithful pilgrims are bartering with the tradespeople and looking for priests to complete their animal sacrifice. Moneychangers exchanged *denarii* into half-shekels so pilgrims could pay the temple-

tax, while animals were offered in sacrifice. The temple tax was required of Jewish males over age 20, and the money was used for the upkeep and maintenance of the temple. In the book of Exodus God told Moses to collect this tax. The half-shekel was about 2 days of wages. According to the Talmud (Jewish civil and ceremonial law), the tax was to be collected at Passover and Pentecost festivals. Tables were set up and there was a full-service walk-up banking in progress to collect all the financial obligations.

Before you think the idea of sacrifice is an ancient one, there were sacrifices of fruit, oil or grain and we continue to bring food for our families and money for keeping our temple and pastor cared for. Such offerings were often for guilt or peace. We continue to give to world hunger at home and away because we have so much food. We continue to give to ministries of God's Word and so like our Hebrew ancestors, we are called to sacrifice. As Christians today, we no longer offer animal sacrifices, but we still gather in a holy place, remembering God's deliverance and seeking to honor God through our own rituals and repentance.

You might think that Jesus, a devout Rabbi, teacher of the Jewish faith would praise those who gathered for the Passover, instead of leading the way of such a tradition, Jesus goes into a rage. He makes a whip, and chases out the people, the animals, the merchants and the priests. He "pours out the coins" and turns over tables, causing everyone to scatter. He commands the dove-sellers: "*Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house an emporium!*". Jesus turns the temple court into an uproar of frightened animals and shouting merchants, while pilgrims and priests stand horrified.

Why on earth would Jesus *stop* purification—and why with so much drama? In verse 16, Jesus calls the temple an "emporium," or a marketplace. Rather than a scene of spiritual preparation, Jesus sees the temple as a place focused on monetary exchange. Like Old Testament prophets, he challenges the temple economy, questioning whether it was focused more on wealth than prayer.

For the gospel writers of John, when people focus too much on a physical location, they miss out on God's glory standing right in front of them. This is one of many themes in John. John would not have been concerned about closing St. Mark's building for the pandemic. John is always more interested in our relationship with Christ Jesus and our relationship with community but not with the trappings of the temple.

Jesus however has a zeal for this father's house and teaches in the temple and guards the temple from being abused by commerce. That the temple is a place for prayer and for the Holy Spirit to speak to us. John is right that we can focus too much on the physical nature of our temple and fail to worship and practice our faith outside of the walls when we leave. Jesus is right also that the temple, the church building embraces us as community to fill ourselves up with the Holy Spirit, with scripture and with prayer to live our lives in faith outside of the walls.

We live in a global marketplace. We are often oblivious to the way the world takes our money turning us and others into commodities. Jesus' speech and actions in this story reminds us that he is the Passover that liberates us from the demonic grip of commercialism on the backs

of sweatshops and inhumane actions that bring us all the stuff we can order on-line fills up our lives and homes with such waste.

Jesus is the temple, that was raised up in 3 days in the resurrection who gives up a different value in the marketplace. As we walk the path to Jerusalem during Lent, we join crowds of pilgrims from the ages before preparing for festivals remembering God's salvation. Like the pilgrims in the marketplace, we should be careful that we do not miss God's Word in our midst, upsetting our tables. Worshipping in Spirit and truth wherever we may be, we see God's glory by remembering God's love made evident in Jesus—even when he disrupts our usual plans turning over our tables. Amen.

### 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 (*especially Logan, JJ, Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis*). 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 Brad Shippert and those in care facilities that we know Sibyl, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne, Linda, Ed and Marian*. 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.**

### **Offering 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.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*Gathered into one by the power of the Holy Spirit we 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.

### **Holy Communion Together**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Take your bread/cracker                      The body of Christ given for you

Take you juice/wine/water                      The blood of Christ shed for you

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

### **Prayer after Communion**

God of steadfast love, at this table you gather your people into one body for the sake of the world. Send us in the power of your Spirit, that our lives bear witness to the love that has made us new in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

**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.

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**