

Home Service for March 7, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

Both Churches are now having in person services.

What if all our words were pleasing to God? Might we discover wisdom and change the world?

Call to Worship:

All heaven and earth proclaim the majesty of God's creative power! Praise God for the amazing and awesome beauty. God has given to us codes by which to live together in harmony and peace. In these commandments, God has summed up the ways we must respect one another. Rejoice in the goodness of God. Praise God for God's complete and steadfast love for us. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

God of glory and might, speak to us with your wisdom, that we might truly hear you. Display your majesty, that we might truly see you. Transform the chaos of our lives with the clarity of your call, that we might worship you in spirit and in truth. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

When we set up barriers that prevent others from knowing the truth of your love, forgive us and break down those walls. When we set up barriers in our own minds and lives that keep us from knowing the truth of your love, break down our walls with your grace. When we are confused by the world's wisdom, break through our muddled minds and shine the clarity of your teachings. Draw us ever closer to you, to one another, and to the beauty of your wisdom and your love. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Christ reduces the barriers we set up to dust and ashes that blow away to nothing in the power of his mercy and his grace. We are no longer divided or separated, but are united in the wisdom and the love of God.

Read Psalm 19:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

²Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

⁴Yet their voice^[b] goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹²But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Prayers of the People:

Almighty God, shield of the oppressed,

Hear us as we pray for the friendless and the lonely,
The tempted and the unbelieving.

Be merciful to those who suffer, in body and in mind,

To those who are in danger or distress, and who have suffered loss.

Let your love surround the infirm and the aged.

Be especially near to those who are passing through the valley of death.

May they find eternal rest and light at evening time.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

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

Read the Lesson: Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words:

²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before^[a] me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow

down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land 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 give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message of 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;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”^[a]

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the

wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 2:13-22

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”^[a]

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

²⁰ They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Message

Our Gospel reading for today at first glance Jesus seems a bit out of character. Therefore, it tends to catch a lot of people off guard. When you think of Jesus, you don’t usually think of Him as someone who gets angry, who resorts to violent behavior. We think of him as a tender, compassionate, easy going person who wouldn’t hurt a fly.

Passover is coming fast and there was a need for all Jewish males 20 years and older to attend every year. Jesus and his disciples also had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. As part of the Passover, these Jews were required to make sacrifices of animals and pay a temple tax. Most who traveled from a long distance didn’t bring an animal to sacrifice, but saved their money to buy the right animal for the sacrifice once they arrived at Jerusalem. To serve those who traveled long distances a booming business had developed selling animals for sacrifice and changing foreign currency so those from out of country could pay the temple tax. The problem was the merchants cheated. To make matters worse this business went on in the confines of the temple courtyards. The place where the sounds of worship were to be heard - priests chanting the Psalms and pilgrims lifting their

prayers heavenward, was dominated by the sounds of clinking coins and the stench of animals and greed.

Jesus was upset not so much by what they were doing, but where they were doing it. The temple is the place where God is present with His people, his earthly dwelling if you will. If you want to draw near to the presence of God, you have to come to the temple. The focus of what goes on in that temple is supposed to be on God and what He has done for His people, and His ongoing presence with them in their midst in that temple. This was the reason that the Jews are coming into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Passover is supposed to be a time for the Jews to remember how God had delivered them out of bondage in Egypt, made His covenant with them, and led them into the promised land. The focus was to be on God, and His mighty acts to deliver His people. It wasn't supposed to be on the making of money, it was to be on God's presence with His people to save them, and their ultimate deliverance God would provide through the promised Messiah. The temple courtyards are supposed to be a place where Gentiles could pray, where they could be in the presence of God Himself. With the selling of animals and exchange of money this was not possible.

So Jesus sees this going on, he sees that these Gentiles who have come to worship can't do so. Now Jesus isn't going to allow anyone to get in the way of His people coming into His presence. So He makes a whip of cords, and he drives out those who are selling the animals, takes the coins of the moneychangers, pours them out all over the place, and turns over their tables. And what does Jesus say as He's doing all of this? "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" That's essentially what these people had done. They have taken a place that's supposed to be set aside for God's people to come into His presence, and turned it into a market. The disciples as they see this happening recall the words of the 69th Psalm, "Zeal for your house will consume me." They see that Jesus is zealous toward people coming into His Father's presence, and He will not stand for those who try to do anything, knowingly or not, who try to stand in their way.

There were some Jews in the Gospel reading who didn't like what Jesus was saying. They wanted to know "what sign do you show us for doing these things?" Essentially, they're asking: Jesus, what gives you the right to do this? Jesus answers right back, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews didn't get it. They were so fixated on the temple building, that they didn't understand what it was that made that building the temple in the first place. Remember, the Temple was where God was present with His people. It wasn't the bricks and mortar that made it the Temple, it was God's presence. Here, Jesus, God

incarnate, 2nd person of the Trinity, is right there. The temple he's talking about is his body. That's how He is present with His people. The Jews were so misled, they thought they knew what the temple was, which is why they so adamantly objected to Jesus' statement by saying "It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" They didn't get it! They had totally lost their focus on what it was that made the temple, the temple. They lost focus on God's presence with His people to deliver them. It was apparent, with the money changers and the animal dealers. If they truly understood that the Temple was where God was present with His people, none of these would have been present.

What makes a building a church? What makes it special? Is it the cross, the vaulted ceilings, or the pews? No, it's Christ's presence with us in Word and Sacrament to deliver us from our sins. Worship is about God coming to us, telling us about how much He loves us by sending Jesus to die for our sins on the cross, to deliver forgiveness, life, and salvation through that message.

Through our Gospel reading for this morning, Jesus is once again bringing out the whip. Through the preaching of His law, through reflecting on the 10 commandments He gave us in our Old Testament reading for today, he's overturning the money changing tables of our pride, and showing us how we have failed to live up to God's expectations of us. He shows us how we have selfishly put ourselves above our Lord. He shows us how the false gods of greed, pride, and worldly things have crept into the church, and into our lives. But, the good news, is that Jesus took on the temple of human flesh, lived as one of us, kept each of those commandments you and I break on a daily basis, and suffered and died on the cross so that we could be forgiven, and delivered to our promised land, paradise, eternal life.

We come to church to be brought to the cross, to see where our forgiveness, life, and salvation truly are. It's there, we see that Christ, through His death and resurrection, has destroyed the power of sin and death, and that Christ will deliver us, as we pass over from this sick and decaying world, into the promised land, eternal life in heaven, where we will never know sickness, pain, or sorrow ever again.

Hopefully we can see that when Jesus clears the temple, He does it for us. He does it yet today through the preaching of His Word. He does it when His Word brings us to the cross, so that He can deliver us from death to eternal life. May all that we do as a congregation in thought, word, and deed be centered around the message of

the Cross, because it is there, that we find our reason for existence, and the one who has delivered us. Amen.

Benediction:

Go now to will and to work for God's purposes. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Be filled with the same love and look to the interests of others. With reverence for God, work out your salvation. And may God quench your thirst with love and consolation; May Christ Jesus strengthen you and encourage you; And may the Holy Spirit lead you on and make your joy complete. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, In the name of Christ. Amen.