

Home Service for March 3, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

God speaks to our hearts in silence. Be still and touch God's presence.

Call to Worship:

In this penitent season, we are passionate for your house.
Holy Spirit, examine us by the power of your word,
the righteousness of your law, and the awareness of our sin.

Opening Prayer:

O God, your weakness is mightier than human strength,
your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. We rejoice that you are with us
today. Open our hearts and discipline our will. Teach us to follow your perfect
ways. Test us with your righteous decrees. As with a whip, drive us from unholy
living, and turn us toward your holy light. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, comfort
and redeem us with your holy Gospel. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

With hearts of sorrow, we come before you, O God, to confess what you already
know; we have failed to keep your laws. Again and again, we have followed our
own selfish will, rather than your holy and life-giving will for our lives. We have
twisted your decrees and institutions to suit our preconceptions and interests rather
than your own. Forgive us, O God, and cleanse us from hidden faults, that the
words of our mouths, and the meditations of all our hearts, may be acceptable to
you, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*God shows steadfast love and blesses to the thousandth generation those who walk
in God's ways. In love, God sent Jesus to bless and redeem God's people. God
forgives us our sins and restores us to new life. Let us rejoice in God's mercy.*

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.

⁵It 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.

¹³Keep 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:

Heavenly Father this Sunday during Lent we bring names of those whom we care about and need your presence and healing hands before You. We thank you for the answers You will send to each for only truly knows what is needed at this moment and in the future.

Lord, sometimes we have difficulty hearing the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple of those who would lie, cheat, and steal. We always want Jesus to be patient, meek, and mild. But there are many times when bold action is required to cleanse the cancer of greed and avarice from our lives. Lord, help us to remember that Jesus' patient words often fell upon deaf ears. Remind us that we need to be bold in our faith; first examining our lives and clearing out the pain, greed and fear. Replace our anxieties with confidence in your all-sustaining love and grace. Enable us to put our service to you and your people above our selfishness. As we reach out to others in need, remind us that we also stand in need of your mercy; for we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. 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 Old Testament 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. ⁵ You 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 is one that tends to catch a lot of people off guard. When we think of Jesus, we 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. Yet, our Gospel for today at first glance seems a bit out of character. It’s nearly Passover time in Jerusalem. That means that any Jew who could would be coming into town to celebrate. Jesus and His disciples are among the pilgrims who make the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate this major Jewish festival.

They were preparing to celebrate the story of the first Passover, when the people of Israel were instructed by God to take an unblemished lamb for each household, sacrifice it, and spread its blood over the door posts of their homes. And when the angel of death came, it passed over the homes of Israel, marked by the blood of the lamb, sacrificed for their deliverance. It was the time when the Jews celebrated God’s grace and Israel’s deliverance from bondage. It was truly that celebration of God’s redeeming grace, has, since that first Passover, been celebrated by Israel, even to this day. It is the most important festival of the Jewish faith.

At the time of Jesus, the religious practice of offering animal sacrifice was such a part of Israel’s religious devotion to God, that every Jew was expected to make an

annual visit to Jerusalem, where they could offer their sacrifices in the temple – the holy house of God. Now if they traveled from a long distance, odds were they didn't bring an animal to sacrifice, they saved their money, and they would buy the right animal for the sacrifice once they arrived at Jerusalem. So right there in the temple courts, there were people selling oxen, sheep, and pigeons to people who needed them as a sacrifice.

Remember, people are coming into Jerusalem from all sorts of places. And not everyone used the same currency. In fact, within the temple, they had their own currency, so even the locals may not have had the right kind of currency on them. And since you're doing business in the temple, your currency wasn't any good there, you needed to use temple currency to buy your sacrifice or pay your temple taxes. Well, set up right there in the temple court were money changers to convert any currency into temple currency, for a fee, of course.

So what is it that made Jesus so upset that he drives out the people selling animals and overturns the money changers' tables? For this wasn't the Jesus we're accustomed to hearing about. It wasn't so much what they're doing, but where they were doing this stuff that made Jesus upset. The temple was the place where God was present with His people, his earthly dwelling. The place to draw near to the presence of God, they had to come to the temple. The focus of what goes on in that temple was supposed to be on God and what He had done for His people, and his ongoing presence with them in their midst in that temple.

It was supposed to be for that reason that the Jews were coming into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Passover was 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 individual, or making 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 focus wasn't there, in the temple courts. It had nothing to do with what God had done for His people. His house had become a place for making money, a place of buying and selling. The temple courts were supposed to be a place where Gentiles could pray, where they could be in the presence of God Himself. So Jesus saw this going on, he saw that the Gentiles who had come to worship couldn't do so. Now Jesus wasn'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 money changers, pours them out all over the place, and turns over their tables.

What did Jesus say as He's doing all of this? "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade!" and went on to said "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" For that was essentially what these people had done. They had 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 saw this happening recalled the words of the 69th Psalm, "Zeal for your house will consume me." They saw that Jesus was zealous toward people coming into His Father's presence, and He would not stand for those who tried to do anything, knowingly or not, who tried to stand in their way.

I can just imagine the temple guards came up and surrounded Jesus and demanded, "Who gives you the authority to do this?" But Jesus doesn't answer their question directly. Rather, he said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three day, I will raise it up!" The guards probably had a good laugh, after all, it had taken forty-six years to build that temple. John, the author of our Gospel adds, "But he [Jesus] was speaking of the temple of his body. [And] after Jesus 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. Jesus put an end to all sacrifices needed to set people right with God, for he did this once and for all time, when he offered himself on the cross in atonement for the sins of the world.

As a result, the day of making sacrifices, the day of trying to do something to make ourselves right with God is over. Through Christ's death and resurrection, God has declared, "The only sacrifice needed to atone for your sins, has been made. Embrace my Son in faith, trust in my redeeming grace, and set your hearts and minds at peace. For my Son's death on the cross is all the sacrifice that I need to redeem you, and all generations, from sin and death.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, you sent your Son, Jesus the Christ, to reveal you kingdom and to redeem us from sin and death. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, increase our awareness in the significance of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, and deepen our faith and trust in the saving grace his cross offers to us. This we ask in Christ's holy name. Amen.

Benediction:

Go forth with the Lord at your side, seeking goodness and compassion. Bring the words of hope and peace to all whom you meet. Go in peace. AMEN.