

Order of Service for 3-7-21 Recording

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*O Love, How Deep*” – **Hymn #544**

Confession and Forgiveness: page 203

Entrance Psalm:

P: For zeal for your house has consumed me,

C: and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

P: Deliver me from sinking in the mire;

C: let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters.

P: Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up,

C: or the pit close its mouth over me.

P: Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;

C: according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: For zeal for your house has consumed me,

C: and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

Hymn of Praise: “*May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill*” – **Hymn #698**

Prayer of the Day:

P: O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

R: And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold Him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant,

or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

R: For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

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? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: John 2:13-22

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the second chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And He told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me."

So the Jews said to Him, "What sign do You show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said,

“It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking about the temple of His body. When therefore 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.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

The Close of the Commandments

P: What does God say about all these commandments?

C: He says: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

(Exodus 20:5–6)

P: What does this mean?

C: God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

Sermon Hymn: “As Rebels, Lord, Who Foolishly Have Wandered” - Hymn #612

Sermon: “God Gets Close” - John 2:13-22

Violence is not seen as a good way to solve matters. The concern over the attack on the congress at the capitol in January is rooted in how the founding fathers made sure that the elected president was head of the military and that the members of the military take an oath not to a leader, but to the constitution. After World War 2, peace was cemented by giving aid to the former enemies in Germany and Japan, turning them into friends and allies, not subjected people. The civil rights movement worked when people rallied in non-violent and failed when people rioted. We are told that anger can be good, but only when it is targeted against bad things, like Covid-19, instead of other people.

However violent means can appeal to us when it quickly gets rid of what is threatening us. On TV heroes can use violent means to solve the problems quickly during the time allotted to the show. There is a famous scene in “Raiders of the Lost Ark” where a huge, expert swordsman juggles his sword in front of the character, Indiana Jones played by Harrison Ford. You expect Jones to have to fight him hand-to-hand. But instead he pulls out his revolver and shoots him. It came out that the script called for the hand-to-hand fight, but Ford was exhausted by the heat of filming in Egypt and pulled out the revolver. They left it in. We cheer on because quickly the hero solves the problem.

Our worship this morning centers on the story of Jesus clearing out the temple. He seems to violently chase out the evil people who are making a profit out of the poor. We can cheer Him as He goes after the bad guys. But then we miss what is really happening.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke this story is set during Holy Week, between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. But our lesson today is from John’s Gospel. John tells this story early on in

Jesus' ministry. Did John get this wrong or did Jesus do this twice? We don't know, but we can see is that the other Gospels are emphasizing that Jesus is riling up His enemies so that they will condemn Him to death. But in John, Jesus makes the connection to the temple with these words, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it up in three days." What does that mean for us?

The temple in Jerusalem was built by King Solomon. Then it was destroyed by the Babylonians. It had been rebuilt by the Jews after they returned from exile in Babylon 400 years before Jesus' time. But it was a poor imitation of Solomon's building.

Before Jesus' birth the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, had made his friend Herod, ruler over Israel. But Herod was not a Jew. To win the people over to him, he began to "renovate" the temple. I put "renovate" in quotes because it was much more than that. To start with, Herod saw that the temple was built on a steep hill. There was not much level ground to build a big structure. So Herod made a retaining wall of huge stones that still exist and back filled it to create a huge platform. This left a very spacious area to not only put in the building, but a huge courtyard around it. Around the courtyard was a covered porch area. It was made of white stone that gleamed high on the hill on which it was set. That is why a person would always "go up" to Jerusalem and the temple. It was so massive a building project that when Jesus came it was still being worked on 46 years later from when Herod started.

So when Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it up in three days," it was a shocking thing in two ways—how could He talk such a way about God's temple and how could He do it in three days?

John notes that after Jesus rose from the dead on Easter that the disciples remembered these words and realized He was not talking about the temple, but His own body resurrected from the dead. This fits into what John says at the beginning of his Gospel when he says about Jesus, "The Word (God's Son) became flesh and dwelt among us." The word "dwelt" can be translated as "tented," a reference to the tabernacle, the tent that God had Moses built which preceded Solomon's temple. John is saying that God in Jesus has decided to make Himself the temple. Why? For the same reason that there was a tabernacle and later a temple—so that God can dwell among His people.

In the Old Testament God is seen as "holy." "Holy" does not mean that just that god is perfect. It means that He is "other" than us. We can travel at the speed of light and it would take us billions of years to get to the outside of the universe—that is if the speed of light is fast enough to catch the universe as it expands. Our whole bodies would tear apart instantly as we approach a black hole—and there is no escape from it. Yet, God is greater and beyond all of that. In the presence of the holy God we would be totally overwhelmed. Why is the reaction of people in the Bible in the presence of God always fear?

This holy God reveals Himself at various times in the Old Testament—a glimpse here and there. But it is too much for people. The people at Mt. Sinai ask God to come to them by Moses, the prophet, because God is too much for them. These glimpses of God are called His "glory." God had the people make the tabernacle so He could show His holiness through His glory. The tabernacle was the connection point between God and humans. It was how people could really experience God.

But God in His love gives us His fullest glory not in a volcano, a thunderstorm, or earthquake, but in a human—Jesus Christ. God wants to get close and personal with us, so He became one of us in Jesus.

That is why Jesus got so angry in the temple. It was not that He was against the buying and selling itself, but that it was being done in the temple. God wanted to have people get close to Him. The courtyard in which they bought and sold animals was called the "Court of the Gentiles." Anyone could go in there as long as they carried no pagan image, like a Roman coin, inside of it. The Roman government, to keep peace with Jews, made it a capital offense to violate that law. In that court many Gentiles came and worshiped the true God. But all the buying and selling distracted from that. Such is God's love for us, such is His desire to get close to all people, that Jesus reacted as He did. Or as the Old Testament said in prophecy, "Zeal for His Father's house consumed Him."

That is the kind of God we have, a God who wants to get close to us. But so often we prefer our distance. We say that we should get angry at evil things, not evil people. But often what is motivating us is that we don't want to get involved. We want to keep those things at a safe distance. We forget that evil is not something "out there." It is inside of us.

Our Old Testament lesson gives us the Ten Commandments. These aren't just arbitrary rules to keep us in our place. They are how we live in relationship to God and each other. They are meant to draw us closer to God and each other. But the sin inside of us not only makes us break those commands, it twists them into either laws that we can manipulate to try to control God and others or they are the harsh commands of a God we think is unfair. That is why Jesus got angry, angry enough to really do something about the evil and sin in our lives. He became God's temple among us, God getting totally immersed in the mess of our sins so that He could die with them on the cross.

God won't let us keep Him at a safe distance. He wants to get "up close and personal" with us. And He does so in Jesus, who cleared the temple and wants to upset and clear out our lives so He can live in us.

Prayers

P: God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often putting ourselves, other people; and other things ahead of You, and help us to put You first in our lives.

P: God said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often using Your name in a flippant or disrespectful way; and help us to honor and revere Your name above all other names.

P: God said, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often failing to set aside a time for worship; and help us to use this day to glorify You.

P: God said, "Honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often saying and doing those things that bring dishonor to our parents and those in authority over us, and help us to show them our love and respect.

P: God said, "Thou shalt not kill."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often harming others; and help us to do all we can to enrich the lives of those around us.

P: God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

C: Forgive us, O God, for not always holding the covenant of marriage in high regard; and help us to remain strong in all our commitments to one another.

P: God said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often tearing one another down; and help us to be supportive and encouraging in all our words and deeds.

P: God said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often being envious of the possessions of others; and help us to rejoice with others in the gifts You have given them.

P: God said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

C: Forgive us, O God, for often being envious of the relationships our friends and neighbors have with others; and help us to be grateful to You for all the ways in which You bring people together.

(Other prayers and petitions)

P: All this we pray as we remember that You fulfilled the law that we could not and pray the prayer You taught us to pray . . .

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer:

P: O God, You know that we cannot withstand the dangers which surround us. Strengthen us in body and spirit so that, with Your help, we may be able to overcome the weakness of our sin that has been brought upon us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing:

(Pastor)

C: Amen.

**Closing Hymn: "Lamb of God" -
Hymn #550**

Postlude:



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"Welcome to our church—even though
you're sitting in our family pew . . ."