

Sunday, March 7, 2021

Third Sunday in Lent, Year B

Introduction

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.

Order of Worship

Today is a typical first Sunday communion service. Pr Peterman preaches & presides. As we near the 1st anniversary of the lockdown, we'll have cards in the bulletin this week to gather prayer concerns from worshipers to build into our prayers for the next two weeks as we mark this moment together: We'll hold a moment of silence after the Prayer of the day (Pastor will introduce in the announcements, will lead into it briefly again after the Prayer and some quiet music could play after people get started): For what do you pray as we mark 1 year of struggle against the coronavirus? (and for the reverse side of the card:) For what unexpected pandemic blessings do you give thanks to God?

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

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.

Readings

[Exodus 20:1-17](#)

The commandments are given at Sinai

[John 2:13-22](#)

The cleansing of the temple

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.

¹God spoke all these words:

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

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

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

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

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that

the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³You shall not murder.

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You 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.

A The Word of the Lord.

C THANKS BE TO GOD.

Gospel: John 2:13-22

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.

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

Prayers of Intercession

When I say, "Hear us, O God," you respond, "**Your mercy is great.**"

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

A brief silence is kept as we gather our prayers.

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 *pause* 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 Grace and to 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 from us or that simply serves our own interests.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

The cross of Christ is your power for all who are being saved. We praise you for those whose suffering reveals a witness to the cross of Jesus. Grant us that kind of courage and freedom in life and 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.

Peace

As Usual

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.

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

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.