

## LENT 3

7/3/21

CB

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Into our comfortable ways, O God,

**breathe vigorous reflection.**

Into our ordered ways, O God,

**breathe lively innovation.**

Into our worldly ways, O God,

**breathe hints of holiness.**

Into our self-seeking ways, O God,

**breathe the notion of sacrifice, that we may walk the  
Lenten walk with Jesus, calmly, purposefully, and without  
fear. Amen.**

### Opening Prayer thanks giving cross testing justice evil

Jesus took the hard road that led to Jerusalem.

**We give thanks, O God, that we too can take the faithful way.**

The disciple friends of Jesus were with him on that journey.

**We give thanks, O God, for the friends who stay with us in  
the testing times.**

Jesus was prepared to confront the evil ones of his day.

**We give thanks, O God, for those who speak out against  
power and injustice today.**

Jesus could face the cruel cross because you were with him.

**We give thanks, O God, that in our Lenten challenges you are  
there – a rock, a leader, and the promise of eternal love. Amen.**

**HYMN 117** The Lord Jehovah reigns

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rNTVGHMCK0>

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

How majestic are you, O God, in all the earth.

Thanks and praise are rightly yours

as you have given of yourself,

bringing life in all its great variety.

Teach us to treasure your creation

and to see it as a gift of your love

so that we might join with you in its care.

As we raise our hearts in praise,

may your Spirit transform us into your likeness;

then our lives, and not only our words,

will be prayers of thanksgiving

offered wholly to you.

God of justice,

we come before you a broken people,

in need of your healing and care.

You shape us for community,

yet in our desire for personal gain

we often forget others,

leaving them to fend for themselves

as though they are not connected to us.

God of mercy,

**Heal our hearts.**

You shape us for compassion –  
the love that would put us in another's shoes.

Yet we allow fear of difference  
to drive us to look away  
and we close ourselves off in protection.

God of mercy,

**Heal our hearts.**

You shape us for virtue,  
for lives that mirror what we say  
and put into practice our beliefs.  
Give us strength and imagination  
to live beyond our small attitudes  
and embrace the Oneness of your love.

God of mercy,

**Heal our hearts.****WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Hear these words of assurance:

“God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom”

Our God offers healing and wholeness  
even when our wisdom says we are beyond rescue.

In the name of Christ, we are made whole.

**Thanks be to God!**

**READINGS**

- **1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

18 For 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 the 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.

- **John 2:13-22**

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

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

**HYMN 350** Lift high the cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C59j6p6iOZ4>

**SERMON**

It is interesting to reflect on this passage from John's Gospel as the same basic story is included in all four Gospels. The only other story that appears in all of the Gospels is the feeding of the 5,000. To me this indicates that this event must have been very important to the disciples.

We can also reflect on the placing of this story in the various Gospels. In Matthew, Mark and Luke this explosive event occurs during Holy Week just before Jesus is captured and tried. Here in John's Gospel it is placed at the start of his ministry.

With our understanding of the varying approaches of the Gospel writers we know that each had their specific approach and message that they wanted to share. In this respect it is generally agreed that the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are probably far more historically accurate than John. To me this tends to suggest that John was less interested in recounting this passage as an historical account, preferring to use it symbolically as a metaphor or symbol which he does often throughout his writings.

I wonder if the accounts in the other Gospels were placed there as Jesus' actions were the final straw which prompted the authorities into action to remove him as a threat to their religious systems.

By placing this story early in his Gospel, John seems to be using it as a metaphor for the central theme of Jesus' ministry. For him Jesus came to renew and refresh the Jewish faith. The intention was to challenge the institutional views of God being taught and to renew the passion and purity of worshipping God. For John, Jesus was a like prophet in the tradition of people like Zephaniah who had condemned the people of Israel for their apparent apathy towards God.

It was a strong tradition for all Jewish males to go to Jerusalem at least once to celebrate Passover. Jesus would have arrived into a town packed with crowds of pilgrims from all over the known world crammed into the narrow streets. It would have been a constant vibrating mass of noise and movement. A scene of chaos.

This would have been peak season for the people who relied on the pilgrims for their livelihood. There were people who sold religious artifacts as well as lambs, oxen and pigeons to be sacrificed at the high altar. Also there would have been food vendors catering for the visitors needs.

As Jesus walked into the Temple he would have been bombarded with the chaos, noise and the hustle and bustle of a busy market place. There would have been a seething mass of pilgrims, prayerful devotees as well as

stall holders spruiking their wares giving the building a general atmosphere of chaos.

In verse 15 we hear that Jesus took his time to make a whip out of cords only then did he begin to take action to cleanse the Temple. It was no heat of the moment action, it was a slow and deliberate rout of those he saw desecrating such a holy place. His anger was pulsing below the surface as he drove the cattle, the sheep and the birds out of the Temple and as he overturned the stalls which were everywhere in the forecourt. No-one was spared the anger as Jesus shouted: "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

Jesus had just called the whole system into question. Sure the money changers and the peddlers of sacrificial animals could soon re-establish their stalls but Jesus had called on the people of God to reflect on their actions. It was not about money but faith.

The old ways were no longer relevant. Had not the beating heart of their faith been lost in ritualism, commercialism and sacrificial bloodshed? Now was the time to face an uncomfortable reality, it was a moment of truth. When all was said and done, were they tied to ritualism and bloodshed and money or did they need to step back and seek the heart of their faith again?

There is nowhere in the Bible that says Jesus was opposed to Jewish rituals and traditions as such. Jesus was born and raised as a Jew and he would even have been thoroughly versed in the activities of the Synagogue as well. It was because of his deep faith that Jesus took that dramatic action in the Temple.

In taking this action Jesus was following in a long line of prophets like Mica, who had written hundreds of years before: "Will God be pleased with thousands of rams, with 10,000 rivers of oil...God has told you what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"

Then there was Amos who challenged the chosen people of Israel saying: "Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them,' says God, 'but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.'"

Also there is Jeremiah who called to them saying: "Do not trust in the deceptive words, 'This is the temple of the Lord'. But act justly. Do not oppress the alien, the orphan and the widow. Do not go after other gods. Then I will be with you in this place."

These prophets knew that true faith could not come through empty rituals. Rituals were only an expression of the worshipful life of people who were called to this experience in response to God. These rituals were to be lived out in Justice, Kindness, Humility, Non-oppression, Care for the Marginalised, Faithfulness and Righteousness.

This equally applies to us today. Beautifully crafted worship is not what God wants, rather He seeks pure worship. These two things are different but not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The Temple that Jesus visited that day had lost sight of the subtle differences. The purity rituals had descended into rituals pointing out the advantage that people with money had. Jews were able to enter the inner court while Gentiles were restricted to the chaotic outer courtyard. There was one section for men and another for women. There were sacrifices that the poor could afford and spectacular ones for the rich. The sense of purity had been lost in the rules and greed.

Jesus clearly stood with the traditions of prophets seeking purity and condemning separation and the loss of compassion and welcome for the marginalised.

Our worship here each week needs to pick up on this approach. What we do here on a Sunday needs to reflect the values that we hold when we leave here and right through the week until we return the next week. The outcome of our worship here should be evident in our sharing the Gospel, or Good News, with our neighbours and when we model forgiveness and patience with our neighbours. This is equally part of our worship.

Shortly we will be sharing in the celebration of Communion. We will hear words like: Do this in remembrance of me.

So, what do we do?

It is more than just a religious ritual that we conduct each month.

We need to live out the message:

Compassion.

Forgiveness.

Sharing.

Justice and mercy.

Support for the vulnerable.

Confronting the politics of greed and rampant over consumption.

Do that in remembrance of Him!!!

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."

When we join in worship we connect with that line of prophets which Jesus drew upon. This means that we are not so interested in the trimmings of worship as the centrality of Christ's presence.

As Micah reminds us, "What the Lord requires of you is to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" Fulfilling that command must be our priority, our life's work.

**HYMN 242** I danced in the morning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkk0YodJqH8>

## **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

Loving God,  
take these gifts and our lives;  
use them to reshape the world  
into your vision of  
justice, hope and love.  
Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Living God,  
you did not just tell us of your love,  
your Word became flesh and lived among us.



Likewise, may our prayers  
come to new life in our world and in our living.

We pray for a world  
in which people cherish your creation.

Each brook and stream,  
each animal and plant,  
is seen as gift and treasure  
not just for us, but for generations.

May it be so.

We pray for a country  
in which all people are treated as kin:  
from city dwellers to farmers,  
those who live on the streets  
and those who live in care.

All of us matter,  
none of us can be dismissed or forgotten.

May it be so.

We pray for ourselves,  
for the parts we are happy with  
and the parts we would change.

We live more completely  
when we are honest and have integrity.

We will live fully now.

May it be so.

We lift these prayers in hopeful anticipation.

May they be birthed in us.

Amen.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

**HYMN 526** Lord Jesus Christ

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA\\_g98O42Q4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA_g98O42Q4)

## **COMMUNION**

Christ our Lord invites to his table

all who love him,

who earnestly repent of their sin

and seek to live in peace with one another.

Be present, risen Lord Jesus,

as you were with your disciples,

and make yourself known to us  
in the breaking of the bread;  
for you live and reign with the Father  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,  
our Lord and God,  
for you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming  
you brought forth life out of darkness,  
and in the love of Christ your Son  
you set man and woman at the heart of your creation.

You have revealed your glory  
in the One who humbled himself.

You have exalted him to your right hand  
where he lives forever to pray for us.

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And so we praise you

with the faithful of every time and place,  
joining with choirs of angels  
and the whole creation  
in the eternal hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

To Adam and Eve, children of dust,  
you gave the world and its wonders,  
but we misused your gift of freedom:  
we reached out rebel hands to be like you.

We bless you for your mercy,  
for you never cease to call our restless hearts  
until they find their rest in you.

Again and again,  
you raised up men and women to speak your word,  
to guide, to challenge and convert.

At the last, Father,  
you sent Jesus Christ,  
child of your love, God with us.

Born as one of us,  
he lived our life and died our death,

offering us, both now and forever,  
eternal life with you.

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up to death,  
he took bread, gave you thanks,  
broke it and said:

This is my body which is given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

When the meal was ended, he lifted the cup,  
and again giving you thanks,  
gave it to his friends and said:

This cup is the new covenant  
sealed by my blood.

Do this, whenever you drink it,  
for the remembrance of me.

And so, in remembrance of all you have done for us,  
we take this bread and this cup,  
and offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,  
made worthy by the perfect offering of Christ  
our great high priest.

By your Word and Holy Spirit,  
bless these gifts that we may truly share  
Christ's body and blood,  
and become, by grace, his body given  
for the sake of the world.

For through your Spirit,  
the whole earth makes its prayer  
in sighs too deep for words,  
longing for the day of freedom:  
for in hope and by faith we were saved.  
Accept our thanks and praise, good Father,  
through your Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ,  
with whom and in whom,  
and by the Spirit who dwells in us,  
we worship you in joyful song:  
Receive this holy sacrament  
of the body and blood of Christ,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

## **DISTRIBUTION**

### **PRAYER AFTER**

Blessed be God who calls us together.  
Praise to God who makes us one people.  
Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin.  
Praise to God who gives hope and freedom.  
Blessed be God whose Word is proclaimed.  
Praise to God who is revealed as lover.  
Blessed be God who alone has called us.  
Therefore we offer all that we are

and all we shall become.

Accept, O God, our sacrifice of praise.

Accept our thanks for all that we are.

Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

Amen

**HYMN 530** Now let us from this table rise

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewC6vndZv\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewC6vndZv_M)

### **BENEDICTION**

People of God,

go out into the world seeking God's justice

and offering God's love wherever you might be.

And go knowing that the deep peace

of Christ works in, through and with you.

Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-u-WxpmOpN4>