

3rd Sunday in Lent

John 2:13-25.

Hymns: 270, 216, 188, 504, 289, 75.

Introit: Psalm 19.

P The heavens declare the glory of God,
C **and the expanse above displays what His hands have made.**
P One day pours out information to the next,
C **and one night announces knowledge to the next.**
P There is no talking, there are no words,
C **and their voices are not audible.**
P Their measuring line has gone out through all the earth, and their messages to the end of the world.
C **He has set a tent in them for the sun,**
P and it comes out of its bridal-chamber like a bridegroom.
C **It rejoices like a champion to run its course.**
P It rises from one end of the heavens, its turning point is at their edges,
C **and nothing is hidden from its heat.**
P The Instruction of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul.
C **The Reminder of the LORD is reliable, making the simple person wise.**
P The Directions of the LORD are correct, making the heart rejoice.
C **The Commandment of the LORD is pure, giving light to the eyes.**
P The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever.
C **The Decisions of the LORD are true and altogether righteous.**
P They are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold. Moreover,
C **they are sweeter than honey, than honey from honeycomb.**
P They also warn your servant.
C **There is great reward in keeping them.**
P Who understands his errors?
C **Declare me exempt from hidden faults!**
P Restrain Your servant also from presumptuous sins! Let them not have control over me!
C **Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great rebellion.**
All: **May the words from my mouth and the thinking of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock, and my Redeemer!**

Collect: 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 to the unchangeable truth of Your word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Exodus 20:1-17.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

Gospel: John 2:13-25.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, John 2:13-22..

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple He found those who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves, as well as the moneychangers sitting there. 15 He made a whip of small ropes and drove them all out of the temple, together with their sheep and cattle. He scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. 16 He told those who sold the doves, "Take these away from here! Stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise!" - 17 His disciples remembered that Scripture has said: "The zeal for Your house will consume Me."

18 So the Jews spoke up and asked Him, "What miraculous sign do you show to us, seeing that You are doing these things?"

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple! I shall raise it in three days."

20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it in three days?"

21 However, He was speaking about the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, after He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the statement that Jesus had made.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

If we are not very careful, it can seem as though Jesus is two different people. In last week's Gospel Jesus [Mark8:33] rebuked Peter and said, **"Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."** At another time, He went on a rant against the scribes and Pharisees. Among other things, He called them children of hell, blind fools, white-washed tombs full of dead men's bones, serpents, vipers, and murderers. (Matthew 23) Now, in today's Gospel, we read about Jesus making a whip of short ropes and driving the merchants out of the temple.

In contrast to this Jesus, there's the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount - the Jesus who taught, **"You have heard that it was said: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 However, I tell you, do not resist an evil person! Rather, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him also! 40 If someone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat as well! 41 If anyone forces you to go two kilometres, go four kilometres with him! 42 Give to the person who asks you for something, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you! 43 "You have heard that it was said: 'You shall love your neighbour, and you shall hate your enemy!' 44 However, I tell you, love your enemies, and pray for those who are persecuting you, 45 that you may be the children of your Father in heaven! For He makes His sun rise on evil people and on good people, and sends rain on righteous people and unrighteous people. [Matthew 5:38-45]**

On the one hand, today's Gospel seems to show us an Arnie type Jesus who wants to cause chaos in the temple. Then, on the other hand, the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount seem to show us a kind loving and pacifist type Jesus who just wants everyone to get along. We can get really confused about Jesus, His teachings, and His work if we are not careful to understand what is happening here. So a little background information will help us understand the reason that Jesus became angry.

There was a special place on the temple grounds called the "Court of the Gentiles." While there were many places in the temple that were off limits to the gentile, one area of the temple was set aside for them. Anyone who loved God, regardless of His origin, could come to the Court of the Gentiles and worship God.

At the dedication of the first temple, Solomon prayed these words: **"Likewise, when the foreigner, who does not belong to Your people Israel, comes from a distant country for the sake of Your great name, Your mighty hand, and Your outstretched arm — when he comes and prays toward this temple, 33 then may You Yourself hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as Your own people Israel do, and in order that they may know that this temple, which I have built, bears Your name! [2 Chronicles 6:32-33] Isaiah wrote these words: "As for the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD to minister to Him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be His servants, and as for everyone who keeps the Sabbath without profaning it, and as for those who hold firmly to My Covenant, 7 these I shall bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My House of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar. For My House will be called 'a house of prayer' for all the peoples." [Isaiah 56:6-7]** The court of the Gentiles was a place where anyone could come and find solitude and peace in the presence of God

The only thing is that, when Jesus stepped into the Court of the Gentiles, it sounded and smelled more like a sale barn than a place of solitude and peace. God's Holy House seemed more like a shopping Mall on the day after the New Year to get the specials than a place for prayer and meditation. The banking and merchandizing were keeping God's gifts away from God's people.

One of the many things we can learn from the Bible is that God takes action when someone or something prevents His people from receiving His gifts. Well, Jesus is God. We should expect Jesus to take action when His people are not able to receive His gifts. Jesus spoke against the scribes and Pharisees for giving people their opinions instead of God's gifts. Jesus scolded Peter because Peter was trying to stop Jesus from giving the greatest gift of all. And this is why Jesus took action in the temple because His people were not able to receive His gifts.

When God's people are not able to receive God's gifts, Jesus responds. He takes action against those who block the gifts. Jesus warned those who would block His gifts with these words, **“If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.** [Mark 9:42] Given the serious nature of this warning, we should examine ourselves on a regular basis. Have we ever prevented God's people from receiving God's gifts in God's house?

One of the saddest things in today's Gospel is the reaction of the Jewish authorities. They should have been ecstatic that Jesus cleared out the merchants and the money changers. They should never have let this situation develop in the first place. When the first vendor applied for permission to sell his wares in the temple courts, they should have said, "No!" Instead of that, they got angry with Jesus. How sad, - merchants were profaning the temple and they questioned the one person who was trying to put things right.

The temple authorities should have praised Jesus for making it possible for Gentiles to receive God's gifts in the temple. Instead, they began to cross examine Him. **“What miraculous sign do you show to us, seeing that You are doing these things?”**

19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple! I shall raise it in three days.” John himself tells us that it was only after Jesus rose from the dead that the disciples understood that Jesus meant Himself when He said destroy this temple. Jesus was saying, *“Destroy me and I will rise from the dead in three days.”* With these words, Jesus is saying, *“I am the Christ, the Son of God.”*

Christ's words are more than a figure of speech. He is the ultimate temple. After all, the temple is the place where God makes Himself known to His people, and Jesus is God in the flesh. When Jesus said, **“Destroy this temple! I shall raise it in three days** He was doing more than giving a sign to the temple authorities.

Jesus cleared out the temple with a whip made of cords. The words "Destroy this temple" tell us that He used something much more precious to cleanse us from sin. He allowed the authorities to abuse the temple of His body. They arrested Him, beat Him, and then nailed Him to a cross. They did everything they could to destroy the temple of His body. In this way He produced the cleansing agent that cleans away all our sin - His holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death.

Jesus also said, *“... in three days I will raise it up.”* This is the sign of the resurrection. It's in His resurrection from the dead that we have the sure and certain hope that our sins are gone. As the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, we know that Jesus has moved into us and we are now temples of God. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians **Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For Scripture has said, “He catches the wise people by their own craftiness”;** [1 Corinthians 3:16,17,19.]

The God-man who took action to cleanse His temple made of stone has promised that He will purify His living temples. Just as He brought His temple back from the dead, so also will He come one day to raise all our temples back to life. On that day, He will give eternal life in both body and soul to all who believe in Him. **Amen**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**
3rd Hymn: 188,

Prayer of the Church 3rd Sunday in Lent

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief Pause

P For true wisdom in Christ, that the faithful may recognize that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of the world, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For the Holy Christian Church throughout the world and for all who confess the name of Christ, that God would guard and defend us from the temptations of the devil, the world and our sinful nature, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For a true zeal for the Gospel, that all Christians may recognize the privilege it is to share Christ and comfort others with the comfort we have received, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For a daily return to Baptism, repentance and sorrow for sin, that the old Adam in us should be drowned and die with all evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who have wandered from the faith, that the Holy Spirit would use us to call them home to the Father, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all who have been given positions of public trust, that they may use the authority entrusted to them honorably and for the good of the people, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who suffer from hunger, homelessness, poverty or unemployment, that God's great mercy and love would preserve and relieve them, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all the faithful, that the Spirit would lead them to cheerful, generous giving from the bounty the Lord provides, to support the Church and to help those in need, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who are hospitalized, recovering from surgery, facing chronic pain or long-term health problems, and all who suffer as a result of living in a fallen world [*especially*

] that God would grant mercy and perseverance, as well as healing according to His good and gracious will, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who mourn, [*especially for* _____,] that in their time of sorrow they would not lose hope but rely on God's promise that He will never leave them or forsake them, let us pray to the Lord: C

Lord, have mercy.

P O Lord, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Rejoicing in His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own high priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

4th Hymn: 504