

## Third Sunday of Lent – March 4, 2018 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Exod 20:1-17

In those days, God delivered all these commandments: "I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation on the children 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 leave unpunished the one who takes his name in vain.

"Remember to keep holy the sabbath day. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your God. No work may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

"Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you.

You shall not kill.

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, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him."

### Psalm: Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11

R. Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul;  
the decree of the LORD is trustworthy,  
giving wisdom to the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the command of the LORD is clear,  
enlightening the eye.

The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are true,  
all of them just.

They are more precious than gold,  
than a heap of purest gold;  
sweeter also than syrup  
or honey from the comb.

### Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 1:22-25

Brothers and sisters: Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

### Gospel: John 2:13-25

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, Zeal for your house will consume me. At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken. While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.

### Lenten Prayer

God our Father,  
you know our weakness and sinfulness.  
Stay close to us  
through the difficulties and trials of life.  
Keep us faithful during our Lenten practice, and  
give us the grace  
to pick up our daily crosses and follow after your  
Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the  
Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Are you ready for a shocking picture of Jesus? The gentle savior has turned violent. This Sunday he erupts into unrestrained anger when he sees people vending oxen, sheep, and doves right within the temple, sees money-changers doing business within God's own house! Not only is this unlike the Jesus we know, but doesn't it violate the holy workings of the temple? These trades-people were selling animals simply because living animals were needed for burnt offerings. People had to get their sacrifices from somewhere. And they had to get their money changed, since so many of them came from lands with different currencies. It sounds quite reasonable doesn't it? Not to Jesus. He yells, "You are desecrating my Father's temple!" He grabs some cords, yanks them into a knot and drives the people out of the temple area: quite a terrible sight. And he heaves into an unholy mess on the floor the carefully sorted coins, and then finishes up by hurling the tables into the chaos he has created!

How in the world does such fury coincide with the quiet, humble Jesus we see in Holy Week? There he will say barely a word, even though his enemies will be violating the Father's holiest temple of all, Jesus' very self. What is going on? Some external reasons for his vehemence are evident. Vendors were allowed only in the courtyard of the temple, not inside where they now had positioned themselves. And the dishonest practices of outdoor market-places had stolen their way into the temple: the thumb on the scale, the inflated prices, all of that. There is another, internal reason which is much more important. Jesus knew with blessed certainty what human beings were created to be. We are made to be filled with God's presence, to be beloved by God and to love God in return. We are most ourselves when we are not entrapped by riches, honor and pride. We are designed to "let go and let God." Jesus was overwhelmed when he saw sellers winking at these Godly values, preferring cold cash and cheating for it—at the dead center of sacred space. Everything had been turned upside down.

During Holy Week, why did he react so very differently? Why was he silent then? Because by then Jesus had come to understand the depths of his mission, which was not just to do social action—as he had done in the temple scene—not just to cure the people miraculously, not just to preach from the hillsides. He saw that he must be unified with our death as well as our life, must unite with us in the terrible hurts we get from each other. Only then could he show how very close and loving God is. Wrath for sure can be an understandable and just reaction to selfishness and greed. The merchants were seeking short-term profit at the expense of freedom, holiness, truth, and the completion of the human spirit. Worse, they were foisting all this upon the people Jesus had come to save. So he hurled himself against the blind money grubbers. His emotion was real and quite impressive. But by contrast, on the cross he would empty himself out. He would surrender everything, including his fury. Wouldn't such a surrender cancel out the grubbing of the money changers? And of us?

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. If there were ten commandments, why would Jesus say that there were only two? Why is love—love God and love your neighbor—the basis of all the others?
2. To what do the "foolishness" and "weakness" of God refer? St. Paul says the Jews had a problem accepting Christ crucified. What about you: how do you accept him? And what about the crosses in your own life? Are they "stumbling blocks" or stepping stones for you?
3. Jesus drove the salespeople out of the temple. Why? And, if you are a temple too, "a temple of the Holy Spirit," what are the implications for you? Is there anything that needs to be shown the exit, or "driven out"?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen