

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

March 8, 2015
Third Sunday in Lent, Year B

The readings this week:

- Exodus 20:1-17 ◦ Psalm 19
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 ◦ John 2:13-22

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Spring Cleaning

Lent is the great spring-cleaning of the Christian life. It is the traditional season of prayer and fasting in preparation for the great "Feast of Feasts," Easter. The word Lent is derived from a Saxon word meaning "spring." In the early church, Lent was viewed as a spiritual spring, a time of light and joy in the renewal of the soul's life. It represented a return to a life in which God was once more center and source....

Speaking of cleaning, I am not at all pleased with the performance of the woman whose job it is to clean my house. She doesn't show up every day, and when she does, often she has an excuse—"I'm too tired. I'll do it tomorrow. I'll do it this weekend." Sometimes she neglects to sweep the kitchen floor before she mops it. I caught her smearing coffee grounds around the tile with a mop the other day. I caught her spraying lemon pledge in the air like air freshener to give the impression that she had just dusted. I discovered her sweeping the carpeted stairs with a broom to make lines that looked like she'd vacuumed them. I don't know quite how to handle this personnel problem.

How can I let her go when she is me?

Every week or so, a large postcard comes in the mail. It's purple, or yellow, or green, and it's from a charitable organization that proclaims, "We need your discards. We accept clothes, shoes, books, CDs, DVDs, and small appliances." There are instructions to either call a number or put bags of items on the front step on a certain date. In fact, I do have some discards. The pair of black slacks that just never fit right. The computer monitor and printer in the guestroom closet. The peach-colored prom dress from our daughter's high school days. The extensive collection of mismatched coffee mugs that are overflowing the kitchen cabinet. The floor lamp that doesn't work because someone ripped the cord off it while moving it to clean the carpets. And on and on...

Lent is a season that creates a yearning in us to clean our house and to clean our souls.

The common assumption about John 2:13-22 is that Jesus was cleansing the temple of commercial abuse. But the animals and the money changers had a right to be there. The animals were there because of the Torah's requirement of sacrifice. In John's gospel, Jesus is not cleansing the Temple from commercial abuse by the money changers. He is making a statement that their efforts are no longer necessary. It's not that what the moneychangers were doing was wrong, but what they were doing would no longer be necessary in the new order Jesus had come to bring.

In that time, we will have a new temple, Jesus' crucified and resurrected body. John 2:18-21 connects the Temple with Jesus' crucified and resurrected body, which has become our new Temple. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," says Jesus. John uses the verb *eyeiro*—"to raise up"—rather than Mark and Matthew's "*oikodomeo*"—to build or rebuild.

I mentioned at the outset that I am not at all pleased with the performance of the woman whose job it is to clean my house. But after studying this passage, rather than judge her and her superficial cleaning methods, I think I'll get her some help. Clearly, she needs the help of someone who knows how to deep clean a house. She needs Jesus Christ to create in her a clean heart and to put a new and right spirit within her.

We do well to echo the words of penitent King David during the remaining days of Lent: "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,*" says David in Psalm 51:7. "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me*" (51:10).

[Alyce M. McKenzie](#)



Reflecting on the Word



1st Reading: [Exodus 20:1-17](#)

What part, if any, have the Ten Commandments had in forming your faith? What right did God have to issue these commands? What reasons does God give for prohibiting idolatry? How would you interpret the promise given to those who honor their parents? Murder and adultery are not just external acts; they are matters of the heart (see Mt 5:21-30). What, then, does it mean to obey these commands? In what way is coveting a wrong not only against our neighbor but against God? What "other gods" or idols compete for your allegiance? In today's world, how can we observe God's Sabbath principle? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

Psalm Reading: [Palm 19](#)

What does creation reveal about God? The terms law, statutes, precepts, commands and ordinances in this passage are synonyms for Scripture. In verses 7-11, how are the Scriptures described? What is the overall effect of the psalmist's encounter with God through nature and the Scriptures? How has this psalm been helpful to you by offering insight or comfort? Sharing Scripture can be done in three ways. The first and most obvious way is sharing a passage or verse directly. The second is sharing how we have been affected or changed by Scripture. The third is simply living out the principles of Scripture. How might you appropriately and effectively share Scripture with someone in need this week? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)



*When God calls at home,
may you respond with love.*

*When God calls at work,
may you share your gifts in service.*

*When God calls through change,
may you grow with grace.*

*God's love is all that we need;
it restarts our hearts.*

*God's wisdom is as sure as gravity;
it sustains even the unwise.*

*God's ways are pure beauty,
delighting the soul.*

*God's desire allures us,
enlightens our eyes.*

From Psalm 19, [Unfolding Light](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

Jesus, cleanser of temples and souls,
at this mid point in the Lenten journey,
look deep within our hearts and our lives,
and clear away all that holds us back.
May our minds, spirits and bodies
be a Temple that is open to Your presence:
and may our words and our actions
be transparent to Your love and truth.
Amen

[Ann Siddall, Stillpoint Spirituality Centre and Faith Community](#)



3rd Reading: [1 Corinthians 1:18-25](#)

Who are "those who are perishing"? Why is the cross foolishness to them? How does the cross destroy the wisdom of men? Why does God want to destroy the wisdom of men? Didn't He create us with wisdom? Explain verse 21. What does it mean "in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God"? Why is Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks? Why the different words? What does it mean the "foolishness of God"? Can you think of any examples of this in the Bible? What makes the difference with those who are called? Why is it wisdom to us and not others? [Calligraphy for God](#)

4th Reading: [John 2:13-22](#)

What guest would cause you to get busy and clean your house or car as you prepare to host them? How does seeing the anger of Jesus in this passage influence your view of Him? Does it fit into your picture or are there things about your picture of Jesus that need to be adjusted in response to this passage? What does this passage teach us about holy anger? How do the things that make us angry compare with what made Jesus angry? What do you think are some parallels in the modern-day church to the money changers in the temple? Can you remember a time in your life as a believer when the Holy Spirit was tossing over the tables of your heart? Which area in your "spiritual house" do you think needs some cleaning? [Rio Vista Community Church](#)