

Stretching Toward Sunday

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

March 7, 2021

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](#)

Cleanin out my closet

A Musical Motif Part 3...

*Have you ever been hated or discriminated against?
I have; I've been protested and demonstrated against
Picket signs for my wicked rhymes, look at the times
Sick as the mind of the kid that's
behind all this commotion
Look at me now; I bet ya probably
sick of me now ain't you mamma?
I'm a make you look so ridiculous
now ~ Eminem*



The words of Eminem's hit song 'Cleanin out my closet'. People often regard rap music as the ugliest form of music. Not sure I'd agree, but there you have it.

Week three of Lent and we have one of the ugliest passages in scripture.

Now there's a way to start my blog this week!

But, yes, I do mean it. This is one of the ugliest, scariest, hardest and mean passages in scripture. Why? Because it has justified the righteous action of religious people ever since.



Protest War? This supports it. Keep Sunday special? This supports it. Break a strike? This supports it. Prejudiced behaviour? This supports it. Against rap music? This supports it.

In fact, for those who like life to be black and white this is one of their favourite passages. Now I'm a man who likes a bit of colour to brighten the journey. When I got up this

morning there wasn't a cloud in the sky. The sky was a wonderful shade of blue, the sun shining brightly, the hills looking green and lush, flowers in purples and white pushing through the soil. But boy was it cold. The beauty of the day is balanced against the coldness of the frost. And isn't life like that? It's full of paradoxes. It's random. There's 1001 vagaries. And those are the colours, the blues, greens, purples, reds, blacks, pinks, vermilion, browns and greys that make up life.

For the people of Israel the temple was the house of God. It housed the Ark of the Covenant. It was where people worshipped God. There wasn't multiple places to go and worship God – just pop down the road to your local temple. God's presence was in the temple, in Jerusalem. It was black and white. And then Jesus comes along and claims to be that temple – They asked, "What credentials can you present to justify this?" Jesus answered, "Tear down this Temple and in three days I'll put it back together." – Jesus says he is the temple, he is the place where the presence of God resides among his people, not some building, nor some box or crate. And once again life is lit up with hints of yellows and greens. And so to defile that place – with loan sharks and dove merchants – with wars and oppression – is to defile him.

So, perhaps Jesus was cleaning out his closet – if you don't mind me calling the Temple a closet! And here, in John's gospel we see the practical, dynamic action of God. Not



something to be copied or claimed. Never something to justify our actions. But a visible, magnificent, colourful display of just how passionate God is for his world and its people. He hates to see injustice in his world, it destroys him when there is anger, hatred and selfishness, he is enraged to see power used to oppress and bully people.

Later, after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this. They then put two and two together and believed both what was written in Scripture and what Jesus had said.

Just waiting for the penny to drop.

~ Neil Chappell, [a weird thing](#)

Reflecting on the Word



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

How do you think the average non-churchgoer would describe the Ten Commandments? In the few weeks before this, the Israelite people had come out of a 400- year-long period of slavery in Egypt. What had been their purpose and their identity before now? How do you think their sense of purpose had changed up to this point? What kinds of “laws” do you think the Israelites had while living in Egypt? In comparison, do you think God’s Law felt oppressive? What other ways might God have framed these Laws? Why is it important that God gave them in this particular way? Look down the list of the commands. What does each one teach us about the God who gave that command? How, then, did this kind of Law give Israel purpose and identity? What kind of “pattern” is drawn for how God’s people are to live? Why do you think there is so much controversy over the use and application of the Ten Commandments today? How do these Ten Commandments give purpose and identity to us, God’s people today? [Faith Element](#)

Psalm Reading: [Psalm 19](#)

What is the most beautiful, breath-taking view of nature that you have ever seen? When you hear or read the words “heavens” and “skies” what images come to mind? Why do you think God “shows off” this way? What kind of communication does the heavens use? Do you think this type of communication is effective? Can this type of communication be used between God and us? If so, how? Is the truth about God’s glory and handiwork obvious to everyone? Why do some people hear and see it and others don’t? When we realize the vastness of the heavens, it naturally makes us feel small and insignificant. Are we insignificant? What is our place in creation? What synonyms does David use for God’s Word? Why does David consider God’s Word to be so valuable? Have you ever felt warned or rewarded through Scripture? Why does David refer to God as his Rock? How is God your Rock? [Tuesday Cafe](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

Truth be told, Jesus,
There are lots of tables that need overturning
in our lives;
Beneath the veneer of respectability
the tidy rows and neat regulations
hide dark addictions and angry judgements
hungry greeds and heartless rejections
We know the pain—and so do those around us—
of keeping up the facade;
What a relief it would be to have it all
upset, smashed, scattered, destroyed
So, perhaps, Jesus, today you could pay us a visit
and help us to radically rearrange
the furniture of our lives
Amen.

~ John van de Laar, [Sacredise](#)

Zeal for thy house will consume me ... but what else is there? Zeal inspired the aged Simeon to come to the temple to wait for the Christ and Anna to devote the whole of her widowhood to prayer in the Temple. Zeal compels Jesus to make a whip of cords to drive out the animal sellers and money changers profaning the sanctuary with idolatry, thievery, exploitation, and corruption.

Zeal transfigures a worshipper's sight to perceive the glorious architecture and carvings, the magnificent embroidered curtain, the silent holy of holies of the Temple as a mere shadow of something unseen, unseeable, and subtle. Zeal moves truly great people toward striving to visibly manifest the Temple of Christ’s body through justice, peace, respect, understanding, holiness, and love.

With zeal, we preach the cross even while it comes out sounding like foolishness, said St. Paul.

Nevertheless, fools or not, zealous or not, you and I are the living stones of the Temple. Perhaps only a fool can grasp this weird symmetry of grace.

~ Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

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

How is ‘the word of the cross folly to those who are perishing’? What is the ‘wisdom of the world’, and why does Paul call it ‘foolish’? What does it mean that the Jews want signs, and the Greeks want wisdom, but we preach Christ? So, Paul calls the world foolish. But he also calls what we preach folly. And then he ends with the foolishness of God is wiser, and the weakness of God is stronger. What is Paul trying to do with these rhetorical devices? How have you seen your foolishness or weakness made strong in God? [Fathom Church](#)

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

Reflect on a time when you reacted because you were angry about something. Was your anger appropriate? Was the way that you acted because of your anger appropriate? What did Jesus find when he entered the temple? Was it wrong to provide a service for buying sacrificial animals and exchanging currency for people who were from out of town? What was really going on that caused Jesus to react the way he did? How should Christians react when they are angered by injustice and persecution? When Jesus made a whip out of cords, and drove the animals and people out of the temple, did he intend to hurt people? Did Jesus react violently? How would you react if someone came into your work area and began making people move and overturned tables? When Jesus says “Destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days,” what is he really saying? What does Jesus say about where God resides when he talks about the temple of his body? What does this mean for us? [Eagle Christian Church](#)