



The Third Sunday in Lent

Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to set forth his praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us keep silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.



Lord, open our lips. And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: Come let us adore him.

A Song of Penitence *Kyrie Pantokrator*

Prayer of Manasseh, 1-2, 4, 6-7, 11-15

O Lord and Ruler of the hosts of heaven, *
God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
and of all their righteous offspring:
You made the heavens and the earth, *
with all their vast array.
All things quake with fear at your presence; *
they tremble because of your power.

But your merciful promise is beyond all measure; *
it surpasses all that our minds can fathom.
O Lord, you are full of compassion, *
long-suffering, and abounding in mercy.
You hold back your hand; *
you do not punish as we deserve.
In your great goodness, Lord,
you have promised forgiveness to sinners, *
that they may repent of their sin and be saved.
And now, O Lord, I bend the knee of my heart, *
and make my appeal, sure of your gracious goodness.
I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, *
and I know my wickedness only too well.
Therefore I make this prayer to you: *
Forgive me, Lord, forgive me.
Do not let me perish in my sin, *
nor condemn me to the depths of the earth.
For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent, *
and in me you will show forth your goodness.
Unworthy as I am, you will save me,
in accordance with your great mercy, *
and I will praise you without ceasing all the days of my life.
For all the powers of heaven sing your praises, *
and yours is the glory to ages of ages. Amen.

Psalm 19

Caeli enarrant

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, *
and the firmament shows his handiwork.
2 One day tells its tale to another, *
and one night imparts knowledge to another.
3 Although they have no words or language, *
and their voices are not heard,
4 Their sound has gone out into all lands, *
and their message to the ends of the world.
5 In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; *
it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to run its course.
6 It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
and runs about to the end of it again; *
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.
7 The law of the Lord is perfect
and revives the soul; *
the testimony of the Lord is sure

and gives wisdom to the innocent.
8 The statutes of the Lord are just
and rejoice the heart; *
the commandment of the Lord is clear
and gives light to the eyes.
9 The fear of the Lord is clean
and endures for ever; *
the judgments of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold, *
sweeter far than honey,
than honey in the comb.
11 By them also is your servant enlightened, *
and in keeping them there is great reward.
12 Who can tell how often he offends? *
cleanse me from my secret faults.
13 Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;
let them not get dominion over me; *
then shall I be whole and sound,
and innocent of a great offense.
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my
heart be acceptable in your sight, *
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

THE FIRST LESSON

1 Corinthians 3:16 - 20 (Alternate Lesson)

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,

‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’,
and again,
‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise,
that they are futile.’

THE CANTICLE

*Lord Jesus, think on me, and purge away my sin;
from harmful passions set me free, and make me pure within.*

*Lord Jesus, think on me, with care and woe oppressed;
let me thy loving servant be, and taste thy promised rest.*

*Lord Jesus, think on me, nor let me go astray;
through darkness and perplexity point thou the heavenly way.*

*Lord Jesus, think on me, that, when the flood is passed.
I may the eternal brightness see, and share thy joy at last.*

*(Synesius of Cyrene 375-414)
(TH 1982 # 641)*

THE SECOND LESSON

John2:13-22

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

REFLECTION

by
Norm Wright

Lord, keep us from the dominion of presumptuous sin. Amen



In a reflection on Psalm 19 posted last October, I defined presumptuous sin (arrogant sinning) as “something that proceeds from a sense of entitlement, pride, and self-deceit. The psalmist is cognizant that engaging in presumptuous sin can subjugate and recoil on those who engage in such offensive behavior.”

In today’s lesson from the Gospel of John, Jesus recoils on those practicing presumptuous sin; the Temple’s money exchangers and vendors supplying sacrificial animals, who felt entitled to cheat people out of their money with unfair money exchanges and fixing a premium price on animals used in sacrifices; particularly, during religious festivals when large crowds would come from far away lands to worship at the Temple and offer sacrifices.

Jesus took great offense to this practice of open extortion and literally cleans house. People making required sacrifices would find themselves at the mercy of money exchanger and vendor who would cheat them out of their money when they arrived. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, as he cleansed the Temple, “My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a den of robbers.” [Matt. 21:13]

In the Synoptic Gospels, this event takes place during the week of Jesus’ crucifixion but in the Gospel of John, it takes place near the beginning of the Gospel. The authors of this gospel are intentional in their use and placement of the events and stories found in the Synoptic Gospels as a way to guide the reader into a deeper understanding of who Jesus is.

Just before the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple, John records a story that isn’t found in the other gospels, the Wedding at Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine. In John, this event is recorded as the first miracle of Jesus. The Gospel of John utilizes what I refer to as coded language and imagery.

For example, in that story, water turning into wine symbolizes baptism as a change in the make up of one who seeks a deeper relationship with God. It is used to describe the journey into the Mystery of Faith as being initiated in baptism and culminating in communion. Before this journey begins, Mary tells the servants (code for Jesus’ followers), “Do whatever he tells you.”

And so we begin this journey with a house cleaning.

In the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple, Jesus refers to his body as a temple. Within Jesus' metaphor is the implication that our bodies are temples also. As Paul reminds us in today's first lesson, "*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ...God's temple is holy, **and you are that temple.***"

It is helpful to understand that what this house cleaning entails. It is a purging of presumptuous sin from the temples that we are; the presumption that I have a right to do what I want because of who I am or because others are doing the same thing, and so on. The presumptuous sin is rooted in lies which are the most damaging sins of all.

Last Sunday, Jesus asked those who would follow him to deny themselves. The difficulty with presumptuous sin is that it is self-deceiving. It blinds oneself to the need to deny oneself of one's illusions, to rid oneself of that which is untrue.

In this past year, we have witnessed the result of presumptuous sin on a national scale. It can be subtle; in that, it can be sanctioned by cultures and systems, but it is more likely to become a private domain, an excuse for doing what I shouldn't or an excuse for not doing what I should.

Cleaning the temple of our souls involves turning the tables on sin and purging the arrogance within; turning away (repenting) from whatever is blocking the way and turning towards the one who helps us find our way, the life-giving word that is Jesus.

Rote repentance can become a non-stop sin-cycle where one keeps spinning one's wheels in the ruts of sins we really don't want to get rid of. If we find ourselves going nowhere in our spiritual lives, perhaps we're dealing with a presumptuous sin we are unaware of or don't want to let go of.

We living souls are temples, the places where God dwells in us; the collective places where the Body of Christ dwells on earth and from which the light of God shines on those living in darkness that's all around. That light can't get out if our souls are too cluttered with a selfish sense of entitlement and mired in self-deception.

There is no escaping the effects of sin and committing sin in this life. There is only the grace of God that shields us from its effects. In this world we are going to sin, but we don't have to be shackled to them. We don't have to keep spinning in them.

Turning over the tables of self-deception and presumptuous sin involves giving it a name; identifying that which is blocking the light within us and turning away from it. The good news **is** that we can repent. We can turn towards Jesus who knows our attraction to sin, our struggle with sin, and forgives it unconditionally and cleanses us from it so that we may shine as the temples in which God's Spirit dwells.

Amen.

HYMN

*Jesus , Lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Savior hide, till the storm of life be past;
safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last.*

*Other refuges have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave ah! leave me not alone, still support and comfort me!
All my trust on thee is stayed; all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenseless head with the shadow of thy wing.*

*Plenteous grace with thee is found, grace to cleanse from every sin
let the healing streams abound, make and keep me pure within
Thou of life the fountain art, freely let me take of thee:
spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity.*

(Charles Wesley 1707-1788)

(TH Hymnal 1982 # 699)



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves:
Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be
defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil
thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of Love, we pray for the whole Church and our parish family. Guide your
Church and this parish in the way of truth and love.

God of Healing, we pray for Bernard, Sue, Bev Ann, Pat Michels, Jolene, Darold,
Jim Black, Deacon John Keyes and for those we hold in our hearts. Grant unto all
in need of comfort your healing presence.

God of Joy, we pray for those celebrating birthdays this week: Matt Michels
(March 9) and Shann Doerr (March 10). May they find joy, happiness, and
fulfillment in the coming year.

God our Protector, we pray for those affected by Covid-19; for healthcare workers around the world; for those who provide essential services, first responders, fire fighters, police. We pray for the leaders of all nations, for all government officials every where, and for all those making decisions in times of crisis. Grant them protection and guide those in authority to make wise decisions.

God our Defender, we pray for the homeless and the jobless in our nation, and for those who have lost their homeland, their sense of security, and who find themselves dependent on the good will of others in strange lands; that their needs are met and grant them the comfort of your Holy Spirit.

God of Life, we pray for those who have died. May all the departed find life in you.

God of Mission, we pray for all bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve your Church. Grant them guidance in their various ministries and guide us in our mission to enlarge the Family of Faith in our midst.

THE PRAYER FOR MISSION

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near; Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



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

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