

Morning Prayer 7th March 2021

The Third Sunday of Lent

Service with Iris Gertschar



Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

PRELUDE

GATHERING IN

Among the poor,
among the proud,
among the persecuted,
among the privileged,
Christ is coming to make all things new

In the private house,
in the public place,
in the wedding feast,
in the judgement hall,
Christ is coming to make all things new

That the kingdom might come,
that the world might believe,
that the powerful might stumble,
that the hidden might be seen,
Christ is coming to make all things new

Within us, without us,
behind us, before us,
in this place, in every place,
for this time, for all time,
Christ is coming to make all things new

Song

ACF 123 – Turn our hearts

Chorus

*Turn our hearts,
turn our hearts.*

1. Turn our hearts to one another,
let Your kindness show:
where our words or deeds have wounded,
let forgiveness flow.

*Turn our hearts,
turn our hearts.*

2. Turn our hearts from pride and anger
to Your ways of peace,
for You died and shed Your blood that
enmity may cease.

*Turn our hearts,
turn our hearts.*

3. Turn the hearts of generations
that we may be one:
make us partners in the kingdom
till your work is done.

*Turn our hearts,
turn our hearts.*

4. As we all have been forgiven,
so we must forgive;
as we all have found acceptance,
so let us receive.

Turn our hearts,
change our hearts,
join our hearts,
turn our hearts.

Let us pray with words from Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world. ...
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple. ...
The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦
the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether. ...
By them also is your servant taught ♦
and in keeping them there is great reward.
Who can tell how often they offend? ♦
O cleanse me from my secret faults! ...
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my
heart
be acceptable in your sight, ♦
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever.

The Collect for today, the Third Sunday of Lent

Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,
to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection we are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**The first reading is taken from
1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, 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.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Gospel reading is taken from John 2:13-22

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple

courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Thoughts on the Gospel reading

Sometimes I think I am the only one who does not like "Silent night! Holy night!" but everytime I have to listen to it, its lyrics give me the shivers. In German it is even cheesier than in English:

... nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar ...

... Round yon virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild ...

Already the delivery in a stable gets painted in pastel colours and if we picture Jesus 30 years later we have this soft, blond, always smiling hippie in sandals in front of our eyes who likes to cuddle lions in his spare time.

And "No!" - we don't do justice to this strong, passionate, justice seeking, tender, eloquent,

prayerful young man if we reduce him to a Biedermeier picture that does not threaten our life style.

This is one of the reasons why I love today's gospel. It shows a special side of Jesus that sometimes disappears from our view. But there is more to it and I think there is a reason why it is one of only four events that appear in all four gospels.

I would like to shed light on it from three sides:

- 1) Jesus – a real human being and my case for being angry sometimes
- 2) Jesus - the Son of God
- 3) Jesus - showing us the way

1) Jesus - real human being and my case for being angry sometimes

Anger shows you are human

When we think about Jesus we rarely do it in connection to aggression, fear, tiredness, impatience or other very human emotions and conditions we consider to be negative. But when we read the gospels attentively we get glimpses of a very human man: He is helpless, he distances himself harshly from his family, he wants a rest from all these demanding people around him, he is tired, he scolds his friends, they obviously get on his nerves, he is scared and in need of the company of friends and: he is angry! I don't know about you, but for me this is a great relief. How am I supposed to relate to someone who hovers far above my head, let alone follow him? Anger is deeply human and Jesus shared it as one of us. The important thing is how he dealt with it.

Anger shows you are honest

Since anger is human it wells up in us sometimes. We have learned not to go into our caves and look for the biggest club to underline our opinion. Christians, especially, try to follow the putative example of their Lord and often have a not very helpful way of staying nice - whatever the situation. Another hard case are people who communicate professionally. We have

learned the formulations of Nonviolent Communication or use I-messages but we have forgotten to work at our attitude and how to build strong relationships. But if you “really don’t care” your whole person contradicts your friendly words and *this* is what the other person perceives. The most convinced fans of Nonviolent Communication that I know belong subliminally to the most aggressive people in my circle of acquaintances. The anger which Jesus shows here is justified. He does not play power games or have sophisticated strategies. He does not try to manipulate from behind.

Anger shows you care

Some years ago I tutored a girl who was attending the 2nd grade of elementary school then. This cute, tiny monster broke my nerves every time she came. It took me months to establish - from time to time angrily - that I was the bigger monster in the room and we got along quite well after that. Nevertheless I was certain that she hated the nagging, old hag she had to go to twice a week. Then following the holidays the first week of school began. And something happened that was totally astonishing for me: I opened the door and my monster entered the flat: "Hi Iris, how are you? I missed you so much!" and beaming from ear to ear she went into my room.

In my opinion it is one of the worst mistakes in misunderstood liberal pedagogy that if you only allow your children to do what ever is in their mind they will feel loved and respected. I think it is a lot more complicated than that. Should they not be important enough to build reliable relationships within which we really care?

Who are the people that are really able to drive you mad? It's the people we love and we care for. People you take seriously are those who really annoy you. Children know this and adults, too.

Jesus is angry not only because they abuse the house of his father whom he obviously deeply cares for, but also because he does not disregard the people who commit the abuse. Could they hurt him or the Father if they were not important at all?

Anger shows you have not become dull to injustice towards yourself and others

On a normal Thursday in 1955 in downtown Montgomery after working all day, an angry Rosa Parks refused to move to the rear section of the bus when her row was declared an "only for whites row" after several white passengers had boarded. The following events lead to the "Montgomery bus boycott". Around a year later this boycott had resounded far beyond the desegregation of public buses. It had stimulated activism and participation from the South in the national Civil Rights Movement and gave Martin Luther King national attention as a rising leader.

In her autobiography, My Story, Rosa Parks said: "People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

The only people Jesus addresses directly in the short temple scene are "those who sold doves". The doves, albeit not cheap were the only sacrificial animals that poor people, women and other people at the margins of society could afford to offer worship at all. Selling them was good business for the dealers.

2) Jesus - the Son of God

More than seven hundred years before Jesus, we hear Hosea's call:

"Come, let us return to the Lord." (Hosea 6:1) and God says through Hosea:

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:1)

Brian McLaren writes about the possible meaning behind Jesus' cleansing of the temple:

"Perhaps it is not merely the cost of sacrifice that Jesus protests. Perhaps it is the whole belief system

associated with sacrifice, based on the fundamental, long-held belief that God is angry and needs to be appeased with blood. Perhaps Jesus is overturning that belief right along with the cashiers' tables, right along with the whole religious system built upon it. . . ."

As Ulrich Wilckens summarises it - John the evangelist claims that Jesus supersedes the old temple, his death at the cross is the true sacrifice. Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29), his resurrection is the real event of salvation.

In Jesus' conversation with the leaders in Jerusalem at the end of today's gospel text the lines between the temple in Jerusalem and Jesus' body as the real temple blur conclusively.

So Jesus - the Son of God - does not only vehemently oppose the abuse of his Father's house as a market. He also - in his authority as the Son of God - creates a whole new understanding of the relationship between God, the Father, Jesus, the Lamb, (at the latest in the letter to the Hebrews) the priest, the temple and us, his people.

3) Jesus - showing us the way

In the beginning I said that the important thing is how Jesus dealt with his anger: He is not violent against people or animals. There is no real whip. The courtyard that the events take place in is huge with masses of animals. He takes the cords that restrain the animals anyway and herds them out of the courtyard. Their owners very probably follow them like headless chicken, worrying about their living capital. He scatters money and overturns tables. As his last action he rebukes the dove sellers.

John Dear even thinks the whole thing was "a classic example of symbolic, nonviolent direct action ... Mark's version [of the cleansing of the temple] notes that Jesus first entered the temple, looked around, left, returned the next day, and then took action. ... Jesus was casing the joint! He wanted to see for himself what

was happening, plan his action, pray over it, and be perfectly nonviolent."

I am not certain that John Dear does not see too much in this scene but what I certainly think is that Jesus was prepared due to the years of learning, praying, teaching, preaching and living the life he had. This was not a violent spontaneous outburst or a necessary aggressive explosion – as much as Christians who have abused this story to justify their own violent behaviour would like it to be.

How often do we cope poorly with our anger motivated by reasons that lead us away from Jesus' path: self-importance, the fear of coming up short, doubts about our worthiness or the longing for glitter and glory. How often do we not deal well with anger simply because we are human beings and are tired, scared or overchallenged.

My deep hope is that you and I in following Jesus' footsteps as a daily practise cleanse our inner being like the psalmist in Psalm 19 says: „O cleanse me from my secret faults!“ That way there will be space for God's grace to transform us, space for a loving attitude, honest relationships and a commitment for peace and justice. And why not allow ourselves to be angry on this way from time to time?

Amen.

Song

ACF 65 Inspired By Love And Anger

1. Inspired by love and anger,
disturbed by need and pain,
informed of God's own bias,
we ask Him once again:
'How long must some folk suffer?
How long can few folk mind?
How long dare vain self-interest
turn prayer and pity blind?'

2. From those forever victims
of heartless human greed,
their cruel plight composes
a litany of need:
'Where are the fruits of justice?
Where are the signs of peace?
When is the day when prisoners
and dreams find their release?'

4. To God, who through the prophets
proclaimed a different age,
we offer earth's indifference,
its agony and rage:
'When will the wronged be righted?
When will the kingdom come?
When will the world be generous
to all instead of some?'

5. God asks, 'Who will go for me?
Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen,
will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome,
will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow,
will walk the road I show?'

CCLI Song # 3163221
Graham Maule | John L. Bell
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Intercessions (by Christine)

Christ, this Sunday, we meet you
as one who is upset by profanity,
aggravated by greed for profit
and angry at exploitation.
We come here together
to share in your grief
and bring our prayers before you.

Seeing the merchants fleeing from the temple,
we are reminded of all owners of small businesses

that are kept from trading and offering services
due to the pandemic.
Sure, putting their work on hold
was back then and is now necessary,
yet the livelihood of many families was and is at stake.
Please be with all who fear for their economic survival
and help governments and consumers to support them
well.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

The marketplace at the temple
hindered many to enter your sanctuary
with an open, expectant and quiet heart.
Today, too, many find it hard to encounter the divine
within all the hustle and bustle of daily life.
Others carry wounds of emotional and spiritual trauma,
that keep their hearts clenched.
Please whisper into their lives with your still small voice
and help them to seek you in the quiet
and entrust their wounded hearts to you.
Inspire us to be messengers of peace and
encouragement
to those around us.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Jesus, seeing you so agitated might be disturbing at
first,
but can also inspire fierce action when called for.
We pray for all who fight tirelessly for justice,
for the protection of our planet,
for freedom, for equality, for peace.
Protect them from danger, from burning out
and from disillusionment.
Nudge us more and more to be inspired by them,
to seek our place in the causes they fight for
and to offer our effort and resources alongside them,
so that your kingdom may grow on this earth.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Spotting all those money changers at the temple courts
remind us that even to this day

the world seems to be reigned by money.
We bring before you our economy, politics, religious institutions,
medicine, science, educational system and welfare structure.
Bring about a change of priorities
by inspiring decision makers with wisdom and love.
Help those who keep on ending up on the losing side
and open our eyes to the influence and responsibility
that we as individuals and communities have.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

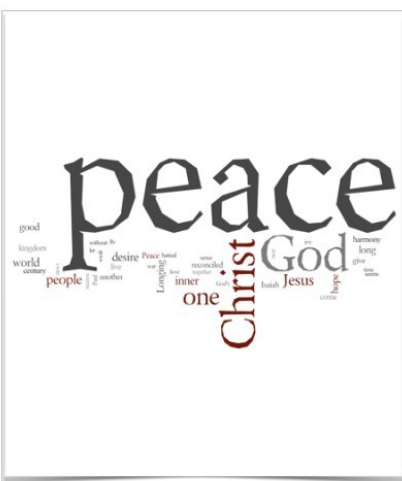
The people that made their way to Jerusalem,
came to the temple to offer their thanks,
to intercede for their loved ones, to pray for themselves
and for making atonement.
We, too, have come here this morning with people and
issues,
that weigh heavy on our hearts.
During the next few moments,
we name them silently to you,
asking you that your presence and love may surround
and fill them.
(.....)
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.
Merciful Father,
accept these prayers,
for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

In the language of our hearts, let us pray as our
Saviour taught us

A sign of peace

God is love
And those who live in love live in God
And God lives in them.
We meet in the name of Christ and share his peace.



Song

ACF 44 Everything

1. God in my living,
there in my breathing,
God in my waking,
God in my sleeping.
God in my resting,
there in my working.
God in my thinking,
God in my speaking.

Chorus

*Be my ev'rything,
be my ev'rything.
Be my ev'rything,
be my ev'rything.*

2. God in my hoping,
there in my dreaming.
God in my watching,
God in my waiting.
God in my laughing,
there in my weeping.
God in my hurting,
God in my healing.

Chorus

*Be my ev'rything,
be my ev'rything.
Be my ev'rything,
be my ev'rything.*

Bridge

Christ in me, Christ in me,
Christ in me, the Hope of Glory.
You are ev'rything. (2x)

2. God in my hoping
There in my dreaming
God in my watching

God in my waiting
God in my laughing
There in my weeping
God in my hurting
God in my healing

Chorus

*Be my ev'rything,
be my ev'rything.
Be my ev'rything,
be my ev'rything.*

Bridge

Christ in me, Christ in me,
Christ in me, the Hope of Glory.

Ending

You are ev'rything. (4X)
Jesus ev'rything. (4X)

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The Blessing



We ask for God's blessing with words from the letter to the Ephesians:

The Father may strengthen us
with power through his Spirit in our inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

We, being rooted and established in love,
may have power,
together with all the Lord's holy people,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep
is the love of Christ,
and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —
that we may be filled
to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Amen.

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude