

## Lent #3

3-7-2021

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Vicar Karen Pugatch

### Celebrate (Introduction)

"The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The commandments begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and profit-making can become our gods. The Ten Commandments are essential to our baptismal call: centered first in God's liberating love, we strive to live out justice and mercy in our communities and the world"

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

### Opening Hymn: ["Come Thou Almighty King"](#)

### Psalm: Psalm 19

"The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;

<sup>4</sup> yet their voice<sup>al</sup> goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

<sup>5</sup> which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

<sup>6</sup> Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them;  
and there is nothing hid from its heat.

<sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;

the testimony of the Lord is sure,  
making wise the simple;

<sup>8</sup> the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;

<sup>9</sup> the fear of the Lord is clean,

enduring for ever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true,  
and righteous altogether.

<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them is thy servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> But who can discern his errors?  
Clear thou me from hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;  
let them not have dominion over me!  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in thy sight,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer..."

**Hymn of Praise:** "[Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise](#)"

### **Prayer of the Day**

"Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Hoy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen."

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Exodus 20:1-17](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [1 Corinthians 1:18-25](#)

**The Gospel:** [John 2:13-22](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** "[O Word of God Incarnate](#)"

**The Message:** ([Video Link](#))

I think most of us have experienced times when our temper may have been provoked. For most of us, and in most instances, our temper was controllable and kept within the boundaries of civility. But there just may have been those times when our tempers broke those boundaries and we just acted in ways totally alien to our general composure. There even may have been those times that we erupted like a volcano totally against what we think about our basic nature. We may have totally surprised others and even ourselves as to such a possibility.

Like it or not an eruption can suddenly appear even within the mildest mannered person. To have such an outburst of temper can be frightening to all involved.

I can attest to that. In most cases I am a person who can control my temper and at least not go overboard in displaying it. But I do know that it is there lurking in the recesses of my mind and can be triggered anytime even though it may take quite a bit to trigger it. Even at that it is mostly controlled. That is not to say that I haven't totally erupted in my life. I will admit such total eruptions have occurred at times. They have not been what I would consider to be highlights of my life but in some instances necessary. Often it takes a sign of outrage in order to get others attention or to break through complacency. We are all too familiar with tempers flaring up into outrage in our nation at this time. When channeled in peaceful demonstrations the display of anger can have its positive effects. But, when it is allowed to trigger a temper outrage it then becomes dangerous to all involved. Sadly it has often taken the physical act of a temper rage in order for justice to prevail. The key is to try to keep a rational mind even through any kind of display of temper.

When something that is so very important to you such as core principals, human rights, and beliefs are interrupted by outright lies and deliberate distortions then tempers can easily erupt into rage. What really set most people off is being deliberately lied to thinking they are gullible enough to believe the lies. Although it is ugly, rage is a part of life and can often call attention to a wrong in order to bring about change. I am not condoning such outburst but the reality is that the squeaky wheel most often does get the grease. Unfortunately this is true since we live in the realm of the imperfect world of humanity

Of course this leads us directly to our Gospel lesson. In this lesson we see an instrument of humanity being used by Jesus – a display of rage. All four gospels record this event giving varying degrees of intensity to what had happened. John's account tells of a Jesus very much enraged at the activities taking place in the temple. "In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables." The animals were sacrificial animals deemed by the temple authorities to be unblemished and worthy of a sacrificial offering to God. These animals were purchased by worshippers so as to fulfill their sacrificial obligation every year. The catch was they were sold at outlandish prices. If you brought your own animal, no matter how perfect it may have been, the chances were that it would not be accepted by the authorities so that you had to buy from those chosen merchants who had kick back arrangements with the authorities. They were actually stealing from the common man and worshippers. It was plain and simply corruption done in the name of God

For centuries many of the prophets were denouncing the practice of sacrificial offerings. Isaiah had this to say. "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, and of lambs or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me." Hosea related "Though they offer choice sacrifices, though they eat flesh, the Lord does not accept them." This is what Jesus found in abundance in the temple.

To add to this there were the money changers who would change secular money into the Jewish half shekel which had to be used to pay the temple tax. Many of the Jewish pilgrims from all over the world would have had various foreign coinage. This coinage would have been seen as unclean and could not be used to pay the temple tax. The money changers were those who would exchange the foreign money into the Jewish or Galilean half shekel. For this service they charge exorbitant fees. Again this involved kick-backs with the temple authorities. It all amounted to the unfair fleecing of the common man and worshipper.

All of this was happening in the name of God right within the sacred temple with the blessing of the religious authorities. To be more specific it was happening in the outer court of the temple, the court of the gentiles. This outer court was the furthest a gentile could go into the temple. This was the place of prayer for him. It was no more conducive for meditation and prayer than an active common marketplace. In reality the gentiles were thus cast aside and excluded from the temple as a sacred place.

To all this John writes, "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." In Mark he does this with the words, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers." This was no mild mannered Jesus but one who demonstrated the language and actions of pure rage which is so often necessary to get mankind's attention. "Now that I have your attention you need to change your ways." But can you imagine the reaction of his disciples. They only knew Jesus to be peaceful and loving. Now this totally caught them off guard. It certainly got their attention.

Yes, it is most interesting that this must have really hit home not so much with the temple authorities, except they now knew that Jesus had to be silenced, but with his disciples. It is very evident that these Jewish practicing disciples after Jesus resurrection did not incorporate the practices of the temple and sacrificial offerings in their worship. Jesus had made his point even though he had to act in a fit of rage. It must also be noted that this rage did not continue but it was to make a point. The rage would turn into the most perfect act of love which could be demonstrated and that was on the cross. "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Times of temper and even rage are conquered when we are able to say I forgive you.

The tragedy is that many live a life full of rage which is not just isolated instances that may in some way serve a purpose. To live a life full of rage only brings despair and anguish to others but also to oneself. Is not the way of love for the way of love may have its moment of discipline and maybe even involve brief rage but it is ultimately a life which finds the joy of forgiveness? The ultimate sign of overcoming unwanted and maybe even unwarranted rage, which may creep into our lives, is overcome when we take heed to Jesus command to take up our cross and follow Him. That cross just may mean the denial of our egos and pride which may cause us to lash out with uncontrolled temper. Healing comes when we can forgive out of the love demonstrated to us through the cross and the resurrection. In today's tumultuous society

we need the wisdom to know when anger needs to be displayed when the good of mankind is at stake and then channeling it in the most peaceful but forcible way. This calls upon us to make our decisions out of love as shared with us through the ultimate message and life of Jesus.

**Anthem:** ["Great Is Thy Faithfulness"](#) Morgan State Choir

**Offering\*:** [\(On-Line Giving Link\)](#)

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

### **The Prayer**

Compassionate God our Father, during this time when extremism defies truth and anger leads to out of control temper instill in us the will to pause in order to gain true perspective of life's circumstances. Give us the wisdom to find peaceful ways of challenging that which is hurtful and the perseverance to come to meaningful resolutions. Fill us with your love so that we may in the end be forgiving.

We continue to be thankful for those who helped develop the life-saving vaccines. Give us the patience in waiting our turn in receiving this vaccine. Continue to give the medical community the wisdom and strength to care for those who have been overcome by this life threatening virus. We remember all those who have lost their lives to Covid-19 and continue to ask for your comforting presence with their loved ones.

We pray for all whole need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Della Mae Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Vicki and Christian Zanartu, Pastor Jack,  
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine upon you;  
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters  
Live on knowing God's love,  
The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.  
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn: "Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me"**

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Though.

\*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill  
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church  
9122 Sybert Drive  
Columbia Hills  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: [https://tithe.ly/give\\_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291](https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291)