

IK Synod Sermon and Prayers
Pastor Nancy Nyland, DEM
Third Sunday in Lent
March 7, 2021

Gospel Reading – John 2:14-22

The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 2nd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² 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.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God, the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem to the temple. And what did Jesus find there? Reading this passage from The Message paraphrase of the Bible, perhaps we can understand this scene in our current time. We read: “Jesus found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves. The loan sharks were also there in full strength.” Jesus told the merchants, “Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a shopping mall!”

Jesus was angry because instead of a place of worship, the Temple had become a marketplace, not only providing needed items for sacrifice and worship, but also taking advantage of people.

Obviously, bystanders notice what is happening. How could they not, as animals are stampeding, coins are spilling left and right, and tables are toppling over?

The upset Jews turn to the upset Jesus, “What credentials can you present to justify your actions?”

As often is the case, having the attention of the people, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach. “Tear down this temple and in three days I’ll put it back together.”

Angry and annoyed, the Jews throw this challenge back at him, “It took forty-six years to build this Temple and you’re going to rebuild it in three days?” Ha!

Listen! Here comes the lesson: "But Jesus was talking about *his body* as the Temple."

For the people gathered that day and for us, Jesus, opens a broader understanding of the presence of God. God's presence is not only to be found in the Temple. God's presence is not only to be found in our church buildings, sacred spaces that many of us have been separated from for almost a year.

Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. Where one looks for God, expects to find God, imagines God to be; well, Jesus is opening up new possibilities for the gathered crowd. God is in Jesus, God is right there in front of them. God present, revealed, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

As often is the case, the people don't get it, including the disciples. Ah, but hindsight is 20-20.

After Jesus was raised from the dead, resurrected after three days, his disciples remembered that Jesus had said these words: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.". They put two and two together and believed both what was written in Scripture and what Jesus had said that day.

Hindsight is 20-20. After moving through a situation, a challenging time, a season of life, a pandemic, when we slow down and take time to reflect, sometimes we have these A-ha moments like the disciples.

I find that the realization of God's presence, God's Spirit at work in me and through me, and around me in the world and in other people, often becomes much more clear in hindsight. Can you relate?

In hindsight, through our life's journeys there are lessons to be learned, blessings to be counted, and losses to be grieved and always, always there is God's never-failing presence.

- Experiencing God's presence as you gather with a faith community on-line rather than in a building.
- Feeling God's healing, comfort, and peace through the caring words of others.
- Being surrounded by God's presence as hundreds of prayers are lifted for you or a loved one on social media, through prayer chains, and by individuals bringing names and needs to God.
- God's Spirit interceding for us when we don't have enough energy, even to pray.

Yes, God is always, always present.....

- Being touched by the unexpected kindness of a stranger.
- Encountering God's presence in family meals and activities that have become more frequent in this pandemic time.
- Knowing the abundance of God's generosity experienced in the simple things in life.
- The realization that God is not bringing us back to normal, but bringing us forward to a new future and a new normal that holds endless possibilities.
- God's sustaining presence which holds us and comforts us and gives us strength for each new day.

Some of these ways that God is present or maybe even most of them, we can only recognize in hindsight where our vision can gain clarity. But recognize it or not, God is always present – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, always present every moment of our lives. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

At the end of each petition, hear us, O God. And your response is: Your mercy is great.

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need. For the gospel proclaimed in word and deed, for communities of faith far and near, and for all who show the face of Christ throughout the world, hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For creation: sun, moon and stars; life forming in the dark earth and ocean deep; mountains, clouds and storms, and creatures seen and unseen, and for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our stewardship of God's creation, hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For a halt to the pandemic; for all who have contracted Covid-19; for health workers; for the prompt distribution of vaccines; and for all who today will die from the virus. For all who suffer this day (esp.....), that Christ our healer transform sickness into health, loneliness into companionship, bereavement into consolation, and suffering into peace, hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For companions on life's journey in this worshiping community, for loved ones who cannot be with us this day, and for guidance during struggles we face, that God's glory is revealed around and among us, hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their earthly pilgrimage (esp.....) that their lives of service and prayer inspire us in our living, hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Hear us now as we pray the words that Christ has taught us,
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,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

You are what God made you to be;
Created in Christ Jesus for good works,

Chosen as holy and beloved,
Freed to serve your neighbor.
God bless you + that you may be a blessing,
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.
Amen.

Sending

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.