

Third Sunday in Lent
March 7, 2021

Prelude

Christopher A. McCroskey

Centering Words:

During this time of worship, let us focus not on being right in our form of worship, but being right in the focus of worship- to be drawn closer to Christ.

Call to Worship:

Sanctuary

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.

With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2164.

Prayer of the Day:

O God, our Guide and Guardian, you have led us apart from the busy world into the quiet of your house. Grant us grace to worship you in Spirit and in truth, to the comfort of our souls and the upbuilding of every good purpose and holy desire. Enable us to do more perfectly the work to which you have called us, that we may not fear the coming of night, when we shall resign into your hands the tasks which you have committed to us. So may we worship you not with our lips at this hour, but in word and deed all the days of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Savior who taught us to pray:

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992, The United Methodist Publishing House, 460.

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, forever. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Old Testament Reading

Exodus 20: 1-17

Psalm 19

New Testament Reading

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Special Music

Gospel Reading

John 2: 13-22

Sermon

On What Do We Focus?

Hymn

Praise the Source of Faith and Learning

1. Praise the source of faith and learning that has sparked and stoked the mind with a passion for discerning how the world has been designed. Let the sense of wonder flowing from the wonders we survey keep our faith forever growing and renew our need to pray:
2. God of wisdom, we acknowledge that our science and our art and the breadth of human knowledge only partial truth impart. Far beyond our calculation lies a depth we cannot sound where your purpose for creation and the pulse of life are found.
3. May our faith redeem the blunder of believing that our thought has displaced the grounds for wonder which the ancient prophets taught. May our learning curb the error which unthinking faith can breed lest we justify some terror with an antiquated creed.
4. As two currents in a river fight each other's undertow till converging they deliver one coherent steady flow, blend, O God, our faith and learning till they carve a single course, till they join as one, returning praise and thanks to you, their Source.
From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2004.

Benediction:

God be in your head, and in your understanding.

God be in your eyes, and in your looking.

God be in your mouth, and in your speaking.

God be in your heart, and in your thinking.

God be at your end, and at your departing.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992, The United Methodist Publishing House, 566.

Response:

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again;

by his counsels guide, uphold you,

with his sheep securely fold you;

God be with you till we meet again.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House, 673.

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: *John D. Jordan* AV Assistant: *K. C. Warble*
Choir Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey*
Church Musician

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...”

Lynn Martin	Pam Hook	Oren Edwards	Patsy Shuler	John Ballentine
Steve White	Latson Lewis	George Taylor	Steve Aiello	Dean Frye

Shut-Ins: Shirley Butler; Esther Carter; Carolyn Hardee; Francis & Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Shirley Padgett; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath; Wayne Tallon; Irvin Wells

Family and Friends: *Lisa Baghdady (a friend of Edwa Meek); Joyce Richards (wife of Boots Morgan's cousin); Chip Hooker (Wayne Hooker's father); Robert Bradley (Business Associate of Simon Ross); Mildred Hart (mother of Dee Senn); Dave Burrell (Business Associate of Tommy Gleaton); Gene Odom (grandfather of Mark Branham); Gary Becton (friend of Mark Branham); Audrey Cassidy (sister-in-law of Mary Louise Robinson); Rusty Browning (friend of Erin Derrick); Monnie Tiller, Mrs. Miles, Jerry Fowler (friends of Chris Derrick); Donna Walker (coworker of Jack Stevens); Gil Merrick (friend of Laurie Knapp); Kelly Knapp (wife of Laurie Knapp's nephew); Paul Kidney (son-in-law of Charles & Jackie McNeill); Ruby Pennington (friend of Laurie Knapp); Sara Krisnow (niece of Marty Johnson); Rick Baldwin (nephew of Tommy Johnson); Judy Bauer (cousin of Marty Johnson); Iris Turlington (aunt of John Zeigler); Betty Jean Newton (sister-in-law of Mary Kamoroff); Tonya Spires (friend of the Derricks); Vivian Almendinger (great-niece of Christopher McCroskey); J. B. & Stephanie Martindale (cousins of Christopher McCroskey); Linda Hargett (stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); Ollie Shelly (friend of the Derricks); Brenlee Carnes; Danielle Spotts (co-worker of Kathy White); Vickie Edwards (neighbor of Kathy White); Robert Holladay (brother of Carolyn Hardee); George Duke, Vicki Beatty, Connie Mason, Brenda Grier (friends of Lynn Martin); Diane Kelsey, Erma Ruff, David Price & Family, Mark Leonhart, Ty Moore, Julie Stroud, Fran Huck, George Dorn (friends of Kay Jordan); Teddy Derrick (uncle of Arvan Derrick); Haidee Baehr (friends of Ruth Frady); Dianne Schmotzer (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); Dan Connor, Denise Paul (cousin of Gale Frady); Billy Johnson, Max Johnson (friends of Gale Frady); Ray Culbreth's Group House; Nellie Gantt (mother of friend of Ray Culbreth); Amelia Zinski (great-niece of Linda Maloch); Wayne Blair (son of Dot Johnson); Xavier Crane (grandnephew of John Ballentine); Janet Beck (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); Vera Von Glahn (sister-in-law of Jo Ann Heiting); Michael Carter (son of Esther Carter); Adam Lavender (son of Phil Lavender)*

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 02/28 Worship: 21

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 02/28 \$ 11,680.00 Souper Bowl: \$25.00

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS.”



Ministers	The Congregation
Pastor	John D. Jordan
Resident Bishop	Jonathan Holston
District Superintendent	Rev. Dr. Cathy Jamieson

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform

Third Sunday
in
Lent

1201 Mohawk Drive
West Columbia, SC 29169

Telephone: 803.794.7777

E-mail: trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com

Website: www.trinityumcwc.org

John 2: 13-22

The story of Jesus chasing out the money-changers from the temple is found in all four Gospels. Notice something here. The Synoptic Gospels place the story in the Holy Week narrative, right or shortly after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. But John places it early in the Gospel, near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Not only that, John ramps it up a bit and adds that Jesus makes a whip and drives out not only the money-changers, but also the cattle, sheep and birds being sold.

The Synoptics are more historically correct. In them, this story begins the plot to get rid of Jesus. If that is the case, the authorities would not let Jesus continue to run around for another three years, including trips to Jerusalem and the temple. John is not trying to be historically correct but is making a theological statement that will become clearer as the Gospel progresses.

One issue we must address is why there were money-changers and cattle sellers at the temple. It would be like us having a bank in the gathering area and a cattle pen in our field. Actually, they served a necessary purpose for those coming to the temple to worship.

In Leviticus, there are prescribed pilgrim festivals where all are to come to the Temple: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. At these festivals all worshippers were required to bring a sacrifice- a bull, lamb, or dove- depending on one's ability. A rich person would sacrifice a bull while a poor person could substitute a dove.

During the first temple period the cattle sellers and money-changers were not necessary, for most pilgrims lived in Judah. Judah was only a little bigger than the state of South Carolina so bringing a bull, lamb, or dove to sacrifice was not that difficult.

However, the second temple period, the time of Jesus, was after the diaspora. Jews were scattered throughout the world. Instead of travelling a relatively short distance to the temple, pilgrims were coming from many different countries. Some were travelling across the Mediterranean by ship. Bringing a live animal for the sacrifice would be extremely difficult if not impossible. Also, the pilgrims would be carrying Roman currency on the trip. However, Roman currency could not be used to make a monetary gift to the temple as it had the image of the emperor on the coins. Therefore, the Roman currency would have to be exchanged to the temple currency. The cattle sellers and money-changers were a necessary part of the system to provide what a pilgrim needed for proper worship.

We tend to think that the money-changers and cattle sellers were thieves and robbers, which is how they are presented in the Synoptic Gospels. That is why Jesus drove them out. While there may have been abuses, John makes no mention of this.

In John the cleansing of the temple is not just about confronting abuses in the system, but also about confronting the system itself. John's account of the cleansing of the temple points to the new revelation of God's working through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We see this as Jesus speaks of the destruction of this temple and it being raised up in three days, meaning his death and resurrection. The focus of this account is not on what is happening in the temple but on what is happening through Jesus.

The message is that the forgiveness of sin and restoration of relationship with God will not come through human sacrifice of animals, but God's sacrifice of the Son. John presents a new revelation. All the proper cultic practices cannot save us. We are only saved through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Not only are individual souls saved and reconciled to God, but also the community, nations and the whole of creation.

I believe this is why John places his account of the cleansing of the temple at the beginning of his Gospel. He is saying to his audience, including us, to pay attention, listen closely, for God is revealing something new. God is revealing a new way of life through the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. So, pay attention and see what God will reveal.

Pay attention and see what God will reveal. This message resonates to us today. The fundamental purpose of worship is to draw people closer to God. But in the temple the people had gotten so focused on being sure they had all the proper sacrifices they failed to be drawn closer to God. They were going through the motions of worship without attending to the purpose of worship, which is drawing closer to God.

I fear that may be the case even today. We become too focused on the accoutrements of worship. Are the paraments the right color? Are the communion elements set out properly? Are we properly dressed? Are we singing the hymns properly? Are we sitting with enough reverence? Are my tithes exactly 10% of my income? Have I prepared the sermon well enough? We focus on the things of worship and not on really worshipping God.

Sometimes we may become focused on things that are not really consequential to our worship. It is like the fly on Mike Pence's head during the vice-presidential debate. (I don't know about you but I didn't really hear a word either Pence or Harris said because I was too busy watching the fly.) We let something insignificant distract us from worship. We focus on the fact that the scripture that was read did not match what was printed in the bulletin rather than listening to the message.

I wonder if, for many of the pilgrims, going to the temple during the festivals was done by rote. Ok, Passover, let's go to Jerusalem. Buy a lamb. Let the priest slaughter it. Then get on back with our lives. I wonder how many were just going through the motions.

How often do we go through the motions of worship? We sing the hymns quietly to ourselves rather than like we do in the shower. We sing "Joyful, joyful, we adore you" like a funeral dirge. We recite the creeds and the Lord's Prayer, mouthing the words but not attending to their meaning. We go through the motions of worship, but not worship.

Even in our daily lives, do we focus on doing rather than perceiving? Do we treat our devotional time, prayer time and Bible study like things we have to get off our to do list- prayed, check; read *Upper Room*, check; read chapter in Bible, check; cleaned the gutters, check. We perform our acts of piety as things we have to do for God rather than being the means by which we experience and perceive God.

The point John is making is that the focus of our worship, both corporately and individually, formally on Sunday mornings and informally during the week, should not be on how we do it. Instead, it should reveal to us what God is doing in our lives, in the life of our church, our nation and the whole of creation. It was not that one came to the temple with the proper animal to sacrifice, but that they came to perceive God working in their world.

As we come to worship, on Sundays and every day, we come to see God. We come to see what God is revealing to us and about us so we may grow in our relationship with God and be drawn closer to God every time we worship.

Worship is not restricted to the time we spend in this building on Sunday morning. Worship is not restricted to just our prayer, devotional and Bible reading time. Worship is opening ourselves to perceive God working in our lives, the life of our church, community, nation and the world. We perceive God's calling in our lives. Thus, everything we do is worship as we do it according to God's will and for God's glory.

Let us focus all that we do on Jesus, to live according to God's will and to God's glory, as revealed to us through Jesus.