

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2021

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**THIRD SUNDAY in LENT**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

- One: Come and worship, for Christ is Lord and lives in you and in me.  
All: **Come and worship, for God is good and invites us to accept God's love.**  
One: Come and worship, for the Spirit dwells in our midst, empowering us towards newness and wholeness.  
All: **We come to worship the Lord our God.**

**\*OPENING HYMN "Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation" GtG 394**

- One: Christ is made the sure foundation,  
All: **Christ the head and cornerstone,**  
One: chosen of the Lord and precious,  
binding all the church in one;  
All: **holy Zion's help forever,  
and our confidence alone.**
- One: To this temple, where we call you,  
come, O Lord of hosts, and stay;  
All: **come with all your loving-kindness;  
hear your people as we pray,**  
One: and your fullest benediction  
All: **shed within these walls today.**
- One: Here bestow on all your servants  
what they seek from you to gain;  
what they gain from you,  
All: **forever  
with the blessed to retain;  
and hereafter in your glory  
evermore with you to reign.**

One: Laud and honor to the Father,  
**All: laud and honor to the Son,**  
One: laud and honor to the Spirit,  
**All: ever three and ever one:**  
One: one in might and one in glory  
**All: while unending ages run!**

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**\*UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**We have come to this time and place, loving God, because this is yours not ours. We confess that we sometimes forget whose house and whose time this is. We forget that all the world belongs to you as we scramble for all we can claim for ourselves. Our actions deny your love, which is at the heart of your perfect law. Our minds have justified the bending and breaking of your law to suit current trends and feelings. We cry out for forgiveness and the opportunity for a fresh start. Clear us of hidden faults and redeem us from those we recognize and confess. Amen.**

**\*SILENT CONFESSION**

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One: Brothers and sisters,  
in Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and coming again,  
we are forgiven and set free to live in faithfulness  
with God and with one another!  
**All: Thanks be to God!**

**\*THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.  
**All: And also with you.**

*(From your place, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

**THE WORD**

**SCRIPTURE READING** John 2:13-22

JOHN 2:13-22 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>13</sup> *The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” <sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” <sup>21</sup> But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> 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.*

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON** “Indignation in the Temple” by Pastor Bill Vincent

Righteous indignation!!...

I can’t pull it off.

I’ve tried before and failed miserably, ending up with a foot in my mouth, egg on my face. It was not a pretty sight.

Oh sure, I’ve done my share of complaining and high-minded pontificating before, in private and from afar.

But it seems the closer I get to a situation, the more uncertain I become, the more complicated the situation seems, and the more shades of gray I discern.

I guess it’s hard to be righteously indignant when all you see are shades of gray.

So, how does Jesus pull it off?

Well, he is the Son of God – he’s got that going for him.

In fact, that happens to be the focus of the story. As John tells the story, he does so revealing Jesus’ identity and clarifying the authority of Jesus.

The disciples remember, “*Zeal for your house will consume me.*” And when the Jews ask, “*What sign can you show us for doing this?*” and Jesus responds with the ridiculous statement regarding raising the Temple in three days, it is later, when the disciples remember this, that they realize he was speaking of raising the temple of his body in three days – i.e., the resurrection. And they believed.

Jesus is the Son of God.

He does have the authority to cleanse ‘his Father’s house’, as he puts it.

And when we acknowledge his identity and authority, we realize: if indeed Jesus is the one who has the authority to cleanse the Jerusalem Temple, then he also has the authority to cleanse my temple, i.e., my life.

So, what in my ‘house’ needs to be cleansed?

As Jill Duffield asks, do we,

**...recognize the ways [we] have sullied God’s dwelling places in sanctuary, self and world. ... see how we are contributing to the defacing of the divine in our own lives and houses of worship.** (“Looking into the Lectionary,” Presbyterian Outlook, 2018)

What in our lives needs to be cleansed?

How is Jesus’ “*whip of cords*” aimed at us?

-as individuals

-as a church

We have the Prayer of Confession every week in our worship, reminding us of some of those ways our ‘house’ is sullied, defaced. That can lead to a sense of despair.

But knowing his identity, we know he comes not to condemn, but with mercy and tenderness.

In a story later in John (chapter 8), a woman is caught in adultery and brought to Jesus for his ruling on the matter. And when everyone else has ended up leaving (because none of them were without sin to cast the first stone), Jesus says to the woman,

*“Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.”*

Jesus seeks to cleanse our ‘house’, not condemn it. He comes to sanctify it, not destroy it.

But to know he comes to cleanse our ‘house’ – to know this and to heed this – is to have the balloon of our righteous indignation severely deflated.

But not completely.

We look around us, and there seems to be plenty in life to be righteously indignant about.

There is still the energy to right wrongs, still the need to make life better.

According to Elizabeth & Paul Achtemeier, the key to understanding righteousness is relationships. Righteousness presumes a covenant relationship, and fulfilling the conditions of the relationship is righteousness: living in the relationship appropriately, upholding the relationship; right living, right relationships. (See Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible R-Z, “Righteousness in the OT” p.80, “Righteousness in the NT” p.91)

Then perhaps our ‘righteous indignation’ should be channeled toward building and sustaining a right relationship with God, and with others, even with myself.

One of this past week’s readings from the Lenten Devotional from Presbyterians Today speaks of the violence and destruction we see in the world. And in ‘our battle for good’, it highlights the importance of **“being faithful in moving closer to God”** (March 2<sup>nd</sup> - Catherine Gordon).

Jesus speaks of the Temple as “*a house of prayer.*” Prayer: that conversation with God. A house of conversation and relationship with God.

And what’s the point of that conversation, what’s the purpose of that prayer if not to draw closer to God.

The Ten Commandments is one of the other lectionary passages for today. The Ten Commandments are not a simple list of do's and don't's.

The Ten Commandments – as God's *Torah*, Instruction – show us how to be righteous; they serve as a guide for channeling our righteous indignation toward building and sustaining right relationships, drawing closer to God and to others.

I find that I am most apt to experience righteous indignation when I can hold the issue, and the person, at arm's length – at a distance.

If truth be told, I don't know the situation all that well: the details, the ins and outs, the nuances, all the perspectives, all the parties involved.

I don't have to know the person well. It seems so clear ... from a distance.

Perhaps an indication of something of the reason for the all-too-often mis-fire of righteous indignation.

All too often our righteous indignation tends toward a righteous uppity-ness: setting myself above others, looking down my nose at others, an "I'm better than you" stance. And doing so from afar.

So maybe what we need is not a righteous indignation but a righteous pursuit: i.e., the pursuit of righteousness, right relationships. Not setting myself above others, but standing with others. Not looking down my nose, but looking eye to eye. Not "I'm better than you" but "We're in this together."

Yes, I need to pursue righteousness in my life; I need to do better. And perhaps you can help me, and I can help you, and we can do better together.

And draw closer to one another.

In the times and situations in which you have changed and grown and your life has been significantly altered, has that ever occurred with someone who stood at a distance from you and shouted at you from afar to tell you what to do? Or has it always been the case (as it has been for me) that the people who are most influential in your life, the people who have had the most impact, the people who have effected you the most – hopefully for the better – have been those who are close to you?

And are we willing to channel the energy of righteous indignation into the tough and difficult challenge of getting to know the situation, the parties involved, the people?

Drawing closer and building right relationships of respect and care and compassion.

Drawing closer, and being better.

There's Jesus' righteous indignation.

And there's mine.

Jesus can pull it off.

I can't.

But perhaps, with a little help (both divine and human), I can engage in a righteous pursuit, living into righteousness and right relations. I can work at cleansing and improving and bettering my temple, my life, my ways. I can pursue right relations. And help to build a better world because of it.

## **\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.  
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**In a broken and fearful world  
the Spirit gives us courage  
to pray without ceasing,  
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.  
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,  
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks  
and to live holy and joyful lives,  
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,  
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**Pastor:** God of righteousness and compassion...  
**People:** ...hear our prayer.

## **THE EUCHARIST**

### **OFFERING**

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**We bring our offerings, O God, not to buy your favor, but to express our gratitude. May we be zealous in your service, willing to sacrifice for love's sake, and eager to embrace your word in our everyday living. Accept these offerings, we pray, and teach us to be generous, giving fully of ourselves that we may truly be the body of Christ in this world. Amen.**

## SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

*Invitation to the Lord's Table*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*(The prayer continues...)*

*The Lord's Prayer* (Contemporary)

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

*Breaking of the Bread*

*Communion of the People*

(Please eat the bread and drink the cup as indicated.)

*Prayer*

### SENDING

\*CLOSING HYMN "God of Grace and God of Glory" GtG 307

One: God of grace

**All: and God of glory,**

One: on thy people pour thy power;

**All: crown thine ancient church's story;  
bring its bud to glorious flower.**

One: Grant us wisdom,

**All: grant us courage,**

One: for the facing of this hour,

**All: for the facing of this hour.**

One: Lo! the hosts of evil round us  
scorn thy Christ,  
**All: assail his ways!**  
One: From the fears that long have bound us  
**All: free our hearts to faith and praise.**  
One: Grant us wisdom,  
**All: grant us courage,**  
One: for the living of these days,  
**All: for the living of these days.**

One: Cure thy children's warring madness;  
**All: bend our pride to thy control;**  
One: shame our wanton, selfish gladness,  
**All: rich in things and poor in soul.**  
One: Grant us wisdom,  
**All: grant us courage,**  
One: lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,  
**All: lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.**

One: Save us from weak resignation  
to the evils we deplore.  
**All: Let the gift of thy salvation  
be our glory evermore.**  
One: Grant us wisdom,  
**All: grant us courage,**  
One: serving thee whom we adore,  
**All: serving thee whom we adore.**

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#### **\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Pastor: ...And let the gathered people of God say...  
**People: ...Amen.**

#### **POSTLUDE**

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