



Celebrate

Third Sunday in Lent
March 7, 2021

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.

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 Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Exodus 20:1-17

After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.

God spoke all these words:

²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

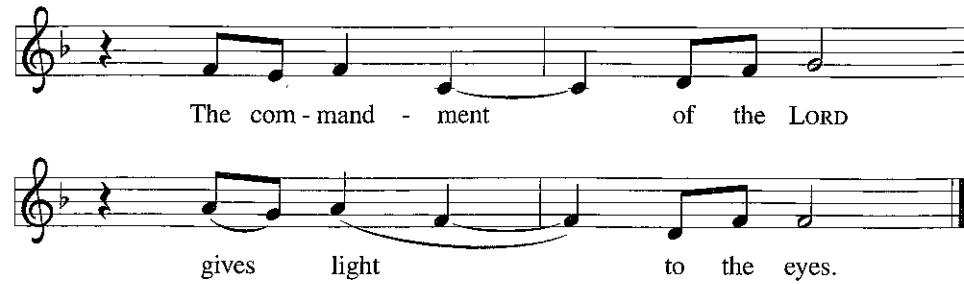
⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

continued



The heavens declare the glo-¹ry of God,
and the sky proclaims its¹ maker's handiwork.

²One day tells its tale¹ to another,
and one night imparts knowledge¹ to another.

³Although they have no¹ words or language,
and their voices¹ are not heard,

⁴their sound has gone out into all lands,
and their message to the ends¹ of the world,
where God has pitched a tent¹ for the sun.

⁵It comes forth like a bridegroom out¹ of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to¹ run its course.

⁶It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
and runs about to the end of¹ it again;
nothing is hidden from its¹ burning heat. **R**

⁷The teaching of the LORD is perfect and re-¹vives the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom¹ to the simple.

⁸The statutes of the LORD are just and re-¹joice the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light¹ to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean and en-¹dures forever;
the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous¹ altogether.

¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, more than¹ much fine gold,
sweeter far than honey, than honey¹ in the comb. **R**

¹¹By them also is your ser-¹vant enlightened,
and in keeping them there is¹ great reward.

¹²Who can detect one's¹ own offenses?
Cleanse me from my¹ secret faults.

¹³Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;
let them not get dominion¹ over me;
then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a¹ great offense.

¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable¹ in your sight,

O LORD, my strength and¹ my redeemer. **R**

First Reading, continued

¹³You shall not murder.

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know

God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Gospel

John 2:13-22

Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making 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. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal

for your house will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After 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.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your church, that in every situation your people's words and actions honor your name. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

The heavens declare your glory. Renew your creation. Provide leaders in the struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to repent when our way of life pollutes the earth and skies. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness of your peace and mercy. Your law defends the vulnerable. Work through legislators, judicial systems, and systems of law enforcement to protect the well-being and freedom of all (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Your weakness is stronger than human strength. Protect those who are vulnerable and give courage to all who are suffering (*especially*). Defend victims of crime and bring redemption to those who have harmed others. Give sabbath rest to all who labor. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

You call us to proclaim Christ crucified. Give clarity to this congregation and our leaders, so that we might follow Christ beyond our own habits and comfort. Clear out anything in our common life that would obscure the gospel or that serves our own interests. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

The cross of Christ is your power for all who are being saved. Thank you for (*Perpetua, Felicity, and*) all the martyrs whose witness reveals the power of the cross. Give us the same trust in life and in death. 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.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 84. **Tuesday** Hebrews 9:23-28. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Harriet Tubman, 1913; Sojourner Truth, 1883; renewers of society) Mark 11:15-19. **Thursday** Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22. **Friday** (commemoration of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, 604) Ephesians 1:7-14. **Saturday** Numbers 20:22-29. **Fourth Sunday in Lent** Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21.

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