



Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney's Lent Course 2024

THE WAY TO THE CROSS

MONDAY 4 MARCH



Following God's commandments and living them in our hearts

Themes for the readings for the Third Sunday of Lent include Following God's commandments and living them in our hearts. What are the commandments of God and how are we meant to live them each day, having them in our hearts not just our heads?

In Exodus 20.1-17 we hear the ten commandments. The passage begins with God reminding the people of Israel that they were brought out of slavery, from Egypt by the Lord their God.

The ten commandments (Exodus 20.3-17) speak of the relationship between the people of God and God (worship, no idols and no other gods). The commandments also speak of responsibilities, of community life and how the people of God should treat one another - their personhood, their relationships and their property. We are told by God that God will steadfastly love "to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Collect for Third Sunday of Lent

Father of mercy,
alone we have no
power in ourselves
to help ourselves.
When we are
discouraged by our
weakness,
strengthen us to
follow Christ, our
pattern and our
hope; who lives and
reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and for
ever.
Amen.

Psalm 19 is a Psalm of two parts. In the first part the Psalmist describes how they see God in nature (verses 1-6). For the Psalmist they can see evidence of God in the glory of Creation, in the day and the night, in the skies and throughout all of nature. In the second part (verses 7-14) talks about God's laws and commandments being perfect wise, clear and pure. The Psalmist likens the goodness and worth of God's commandments to gold and honey - things both valuable, beautiful and sweet. The Psalm ends with a verse often used by preachers before their sermon, which reminds us that the Lord is our strength and God is the one who redeems us. However, verse 14 reminds us that it is not just the words of our mouths that reveal our souls but also the things our hearts meditate upon.

In the passage from 1 Corinthians 1.18-25 we hear Paul writing to the church in Corinth about the cross. Paul was writing to a church divided on issues around leadership, spiritual gifts, and appropriate behaviours so Paul writes about the cross. Paul writes about the paradoxes in the Christian faith - the power of God and the powerlessness of God. The word foolish is used by Paul five times in this passage - Paul makes us questions what is wise and what is foolish. God's foolishness in the cross can make us question what we value in life, in faith, and in others. We are also united under the cross of Christ.

In the Gospel of John we hear Jesus in the Temple, turning over tables (John 2.13-22).

This passage is sometimes referred to as Jesus cleansing the temple, throwing out the sellers of livestock and maybe the people too. Jesus is angry in this passage of scripture - what might have made him angry? Perhaps it's people taking advantage of those seeking to worship in selling goods and bad exchange rates, perhaps it's the use of the space?

The Gospel of John is full of signs and symbols. The first sign is the miracle at Cana of Jesus revealing his glory in turning water into wine. What might be the significance of Jesus cleansing the temple? Could it be that Jesus is revealing that there are to be new ways to worship God? Jesus is acting here as prophet, priest and king. The prophets of Israel bemoaned at the people for degrading, reducing or debasing worship of God. Jesus is doing the same in challenging and turning over tables in the temple.

Let the words of
my mouth and
the meditation of
my heart be
acceptable in
your sight, O
Lord, my
strength and my
redeemer.

Psalm 19.14

WEEKLY PATTERN

Sunday
RCL Eucharist
Readings and Collect

Monday
Delving Deeper into
the Readings

Tuesday
Words from Others
(sacred & secular)

Wednesday
Resources from the
Arts

Thursday
Contemplative Acts

Friday
Personal Reflection
- what this means to
me

Saturday
Acts & Deeds

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT

- In the passage from Exodus we hear God extolling the commandment to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it Holy and the value of rest (Exodus 20. 8-11). What does a Sabbath day look like to you in this Season of Lent? As we approach the middle of Lent, and the Fourth Sunday of Lent (sometimes called Laetare Sunday) how might you consider this commandment to rest?
- In the Gospel of John (2.16) Jesus calls the Temple a “marketplace.” Why is Jesus so angry? What can we learn from his anger?
- What do you think Jesus might have meant when he was speaking about ‘the temple of his body’ (John 2.21b)?
- What other signs of Jesus’ glory can you think of in the Gospel readings we have read this Lent so far?



Aertsen, Pieter. Cleansing of the Temple, detail, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. Add a little bit of body text [retrieved March 1, 2024]. Original source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Aertsen_Christ_cleansing_the_Temple.png.

- The refrain used for Psalm 19 is ‘You, Lord, have the words of eternal life.’ What are the words of eternal life from God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) that are most meaningful to you and which are the ones that are the most challenging for you? If you’re in a group you might wish to share these and reflect on them together.



You, Lord,
have the
words of
eternal life.

*Refrain for
Psalm 19*

Eternal God,
the light of the
minds that know
you,
the joy of the
hearts that love
you,
and the strength
of the wills that
serve you:
grant us so to
know you
that we may
truly love you,
so to love you
that we may
truly serve you,
whose service is
perfect freedom;
through Jesus
Christ our Lord.
Amen

*after Augustine
of Hippo (430)*