



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 7 MARCH 2021 – 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Psalm 19

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God ♦
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 One day pours out its song to another ♦
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.
- 3 They have neither speech nor language ♦
and their voices are not heard,
- 4 Yet their sound has gone out into all lands ♦
and their words to the ends of the world.
- 5 In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun, ♦
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.
- 6 It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again, ♦
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; ♦
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart; ♦
the commandment of the Lord is pure
and gives light to the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; ♦

the judgements of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold, ◆
sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.

11 By them also is your servant taught ◆
and in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can tell how often they offend? ◆
O cleanse me from my secret faults!

13 Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me; ◆
so shall I be undefiled,
and innocent of great offence.

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

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1 Corinthians 1.18-25

18 For 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. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." 20 Where 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? 21 For 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. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, 23 but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 2.13-22

3 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.

Reflection - this week from Mary-Lou

To set the scene, today I'm sharing with you slightly adapted words written by the writer Paul C Shupe. As the Gospel begins, Passover was near. Hearts and minds were focused on the Exodus and expectations of deliverance. A faithful Jew, Jesus comes to the Temple, sacred space, the dwelling place of God on the earth. It was a magnificent place! What a sight it must have been! But appearances can be deceiving. Entering the temple precincts Jesus found little in the way of sacred space. The Court of the Gentiles looked and sounded like an open-air market. Cattle bellowing, sheep bleating, turtle doves cooing, people yelling, coins clanging. Ironically, the activity – the commerce – was necessary for the functioning of the Temple. The Temple tax had to be paid in temple coinage, so money changers were necessary. Because sacrificial animals had to be without blemish, sellers of the right sacrificial animals were necessary. All of this activity was in service to the temple, but ... did it have to happen inside the Temple precincts? Was it really necessary to rob the Gentiles of the one area in the temple they were allowed to enter and pray? Entering the Temple, Jesus discovered just how deceiving appearances can be. The Temple looked as though it was doing what it should. Up close, he saw that it had forgotten its true purpose. It had been taken over by buyers and sellers, consumers and marketeers. What Jesus saw was an outrage. Moving through the 'market' with a whip (probably not the picture of Jesus most of us hold precious) he created holy havoc. Imagine the scene! Tables over-turned, coins bouncing across the floor, animals squealing and running wildly, the flapping of doves' wings, and Jesus yelling 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market place!'

Jesus had thrown down the gauntlet. The challenge was immediate, and dramatic. We notice though that the authorities don't seem to ask why Jesus has acted in this way. They knew that one day the Lord or the Lord's anointed would suddenly appear in the Temple to straighten things out. What they did was ask for evidence that HE was the one with the authority to do this! The challenging thing for us the Church is that they were doing these things because they believed they were right. They had no intention of violating God's purposes and they would never knowingly have opposed God. We're like that too, aren't we? Yet Jesus's words and actions vividly suggested the Temple authorities were actually acting directly in opposition to God's purpose and will.

This holy havoc hits us just about halfway through Lent. Jesus's harshest words in the Gospels were directed at the religious people around him. Remember John's opening words in Chapter 1: He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. We want to be faithful, we want to obey God's will. This event holds up a mirror to us and we have to face the reflection. As a faithful disciple of Christ or as the Body of Christ in the world, is that

appearance backed up by integrity or is it, like the Temple, actually deceiving? Do we need to ask God to do some clearing out in us, as individuals or as the Church?

The shadow of the cross falls over the aftermath of these dramatic events in the Temple. John's message is clear. We cannot understand Jesus until we have the whole story. The disciples wouldn't until they had lived through not just Good Friday but Easter day. Taking only parts of the story will lead us to an incomplete understanding of Jesus – and that might leave us in a temple of our own building, where we think we're obeying God, but actually stand in opposition to God's will. How will we know? By hanging in there through it all in the strength of the Holy Spirit, by recognising the true light for who he is, by accepting him – and by constantly praying *Our Father ... Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done ... not mine.*
Amen.

In this homily, the words of Paul C Shupe are shared from "Feasting on the Word" Year B, Vol 2: Third Sunday in Lent ed D L Bartlett & B Brown Taylor; Pub WJK