

Church at Home

Sunday 7th March 2021

The Third Sunday of Lent

No-one can see his own errors: deliver me, O Lord, from hidden faults. Psalm 19: verse 12

Roger writes:

This is a challenging verse from the Psalm for this Sunday. How do we judge our own behaviour in our own eyes and through the eyes of God?

Are we the sort of person who says I am as good as the next person and better than most?

Or are we the sort of person that feels wretched about themselves and of very little worth?

Do we, perhaps, wander between those positions depending on the circumstances around us?

How can we make sense of ourselves and move forward, especially as we hopefully begin to move beyond the prison of lockdown into the freedom of the new normal?

For our third Sunday of Lent, we have some very helpful readings to move us forward.

The Bible readings for this Sunday:

[Exodus 20:1-17](#) - The Ten Commandments are pretty clear advice about our behaviour – even more so when you look beyond the ‘thou shalt nots’ to what that means ‘thou shalt’ do.

[Psalm 19](#) - The psalmist recognises where to look for the answers for where we are and where we should be.

[1 Corinthians 1:18-25](#) - Paul reminds us not to look to the world for answers about how we should live without trying to see them through the eyes of God. He is very clear about what foolishness and wisdom look like.

[John 2:13-22](#) - Jesus cleanses the Temple which reminds us that uncertainty about ourselves and the values of the world should not stop us from action for his sake.

Before we sing, read or pray

Take a moment to settle yourself for prayer and worship. As you breathe in slowly, welcome the presence of Christ into your heart, mind and soul; as you breathe out slowly, let go of all those things that distract and disturb your life.

Whatever it is that you or your loved ones are going through at the moment, God knows about it and in Christ feels its pain. God longs to welcome us into the safe place of love.

At the same time, we also know that we let God down. Take a moment to read through the ten commandments in the Old Testament reading; pause after each one, and ask for God’s forgiveness for the ways in which we have failed to be all that God has planned us to do and to become.

Pause again, and then hear Christ’s words personally to you: **‘Your sins are forgiven, in Jesus’ name’**

The Lord is here; God’s Spirit is with us!



Suggested hymns:

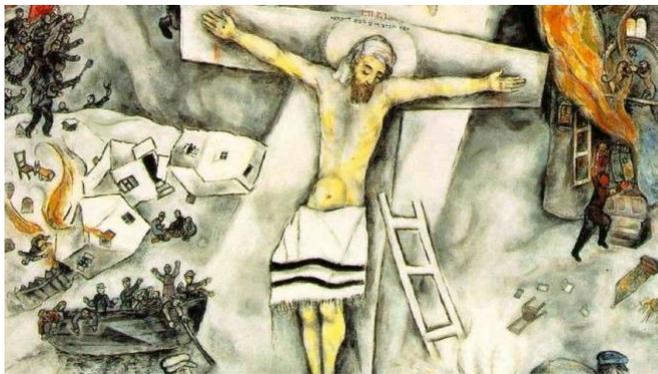
[Bless the Lord, o my soul \(10,000 reasons\)](#)
[All people that on earth do dwell](#)
[O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder](#)
[As a deer pants for the water](#)
[Seek ye first the Kingdom of God](#)
[The Law of the Lord is perfect](#)
[The heavens declare](#)
[O for a heart to praise my God](#)



Quentin Matsys
1466-1530

First thoughts on today's readings

On our journey through Lent, the cross is coming more and more into focus. It's not easy to explain to those who look on at the Christian faith why we find the cross so important and why we devote so much time to stepping into its truth. As Paul says in the Epistle for today, it just looks like foolishness. Why focus on a death, and such a terrible death at that? But the truth is that it's the only way we can begin to make any sense of life. As we look back over this pandemic year, there's been a lot of death, hardship



and suffering which has touched all of us in some way to a greater or lesser degree. Unless our God understands this, has first-hand experience of it and can transform it, surely our faith is irrelevant and has nothing to offer a broken world. But it is because God stepped into this world in the person of Jesus Christ and suffered hardship, bereavement, pain and death – a death where he struggled to breathe and experienced fear and isolation – that we do have something to offer of comfort and help to those

around us, for whom this year has been so difficult. As we prepare to emerge from lockdown, let's not forget how God has been suffering with us in the very heart of all that has been difficult, and promises to guide us through to resurrection and new life, which is 'the temple of his body' that was rebuilt in three days after the events of Good Friday, as our Gospel reading foreshadows.

(Painting by Marc Chagall 1887-1985)

For our prayers, let us remember:

- Our friends and family, who some of us haven't seen face to face for many months.
- For teachers and children back in school and for wisdom as to how to keep them safe.
- For churches making plans to return to 'face-to-face' church around Easter; and for creative plans to tell the story of Easter in the village
- For those we know who are sick, at home or in hospital. And for those whose mental health has suffered during this crisis, asking for inspiration as to how our churches might address these big questions
- For our local team hosting Monday morning assemblies on line for Lambourne Primary School
- For particular items from the international news that God has put on your heart this morning.

Add any other people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond.

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For further reflection

The Old Testament reading for this Sunday offers us the opportunity to reflect on the 10 Commandments. A plaque with these commandments written out in full used to adorn the walls of most of our churches at one time, but they are rarely part of church furniture anymore and even not often read out in full in services. The 10 Commandments set out the fundamental principles of how we are to treat God and treat our fellow human beings. As Lent is a time to think through what being followers of Jesus means, then surely these laws given to Moses on Mount Sinai are an important reference point for our own Christian discipleship today. Jesus himself expanded upon them in the Sermon on the Mount, allowing them to speak powerfully into our attitudes and behaviour towards each other as well as shape how we love the Lord our God with all your heart.

The following reflection comes from *Common Worship* and thoughtfully parallels the original decalogue with corresponding verses from the New Testament.

Hear these commandments which God has given to his people, and examine your hearts.

I am the Lord your God: you shall have no other gods but me.

You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

You shall not make for yourself any idol

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

You shall not dishonour the name of the Lord your God.

You shall worship him with awe and reverence.

Remember the sabbath and keep it holy.

Christ has risen from the dead: set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Honour your father and mother.

Live as servants of God; let us work for the good of all, especially members of the household of faith.

You shall not commit murder.

Live peaceably with all; overcome evil with good.

You shall not commit adultery.

Know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

You shall not steal.

Be honest in all you do, and care for those in need.

You shall not be a false witness.

Let everyone speak the truth.

You shall not covet anything which belongs to your neighbour.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus:

‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

Love your neighbour as yourself, for love is the fulfilling of the law.

The House of Prayer by William Cowper

Thy mansion is the Christian's heart,
O Lord, Thy dwelling place secure!
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door.

Devoted as it is to Thee,
A thievish swarm frequents the place,
They steal away my hopes from me,
And rob my Saviour of His praise.

There, too, a sharp designing trade
Sin, Satan, and the World maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade
To part with ease, and purchase pain.

I know them, and I hate their din;
And weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve Thee as I would.

Oh! for the joy thy presence gives,
What peace shall reign when Thou art there;
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm delightful house of prayer.

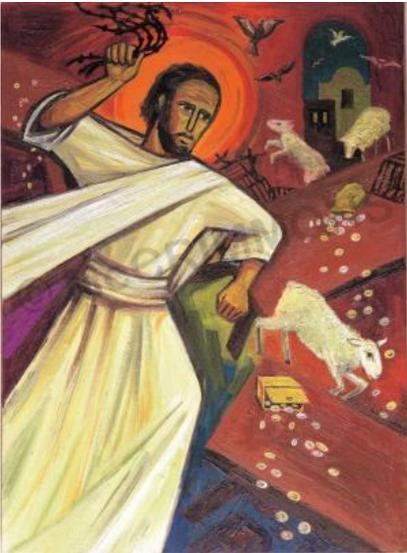
And if Thou make Thy temple shine,
Yet self-abased, will I adore;
The gold and silver are not mine;
I give Thee what was Thine before.

For further reflection and activities for the whole family

[Here](#) is the Gospel story

[Here](#) is a short film clip of the Gospel

[Here](#) is a short animated version of the Gospel



The Temple was at the heart of the Jewish religion at this time and to worship there for one of the great festivals of the faith was a high point for any Jewish believer. This was particularly true of the annual Passover celebrations, which remembered the time when God rescued the nation from being slaves in Egypt. At Passover thousands of pilgrims arrived and would crowd into the outer courts eager to buy the necessary animals - mainly sheep or doves - to use in the special ceremonies. The religious leaders set up market stalls for this and also, because the use of Roman coins was forbidden in the Temple precincts, there was a place to change money into the right currency to spend. In fact, it had become a huge money-making event and this was the accepted custom - that is, until Jesus appeared. He dared to challenge the whole system that had turned a holy place of faith into a fairground of noisy trading. When he

had visited the Temple as a young boy, Jesus had told Mary that this was his father's house and it is these very words that now echo around this building again, as he drives out all those who are buying and selling. When challenged by the authorities, he replies with what seemed to them to be a riddle, claiming that, should the Temple be destroyed, he would rebuild it in three days. Only much later did his disciples realise what he was saying. He was predicting his resurrection; however, the Jewish leaders took his words literally and stored them up as evidence to use against him when they put him on trial for insulting the Temple and their God.

Questions to talk about together:

I wonder.....

does it surprise you that Jesus acted so violently in this story?

what was it that made Jesus so angry?

what did Jesus mean about rebuilding the temple in three days?

when, if ever, is it right to be really angry like this?

what different opinions were there now about Jesus?

Visual aid

Turn a small doll's house table upside down and use this as a focus for today's story. Jesus was always turning ideas upside down and now even the furniture is being overturned!

Activity idea

This is a story of great anger, uproar and confusion. We have rarely seen Jesus this angry and this violent. As his disciples realised later, it was because he loved God so much that he was furious with the way God's house was being spoiled. Divide up the following sound effects between you as a family: the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, the cooing of doves, the rattle of coins falling, the shouts of the stallholders and the angry voice of Jesus. Rehearse the sounds individually and then, on the count of three, all join together to recreate the noise in the temple the day Jesus arrived. Make Jesus' words the last and loudest sound to be heard.

A picture to decorate as you talk about the story....

