

Order of worship on March 3, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Christine Tian)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 626 Lord of all power
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 201 We come to ask your forgiveness
- Prayer for children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- Second reading: Psalm 19 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: John 2:13-22
- Sermon: Temple cleansing
- Praise song – BOP 210 Man of sorrows, wondrous name
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 637 Take my life, and let it be consecrate

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

One: On this third Sunday of Lent, we see Jesus, overturning the tables of the money changers as he drove them out of the temple.

All: We are surprised by his actions.

One: Yet there is much in our lives and the world that needs to be overturned and driven out.

All: In the name of Jesus, we work to overcome oppression, poverty, and injustice in our local communities and with partners around the world.

Praise song – BOP 626 Lord of all power

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God of majesty and mercy, you set the universe in motion and call all creatures into being.

Mountains and small hills alike speak of your majesty, for no detail misses your care and

attention. You know each of us by name, and make yourself known to those who seek you. We

gather in your presence to listen for your wisdom for our times and our lives. To you, O God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, we offer all honour and glory in our prayers and our praise

this day and every day, now and always.

Wise and welcoming God, You are always seeking us out, yet we confess that we are easily distracted from your presence. We envy those who are successful in the world's terms, and pursue our own desires. We fail to question the cost of our desires to the earth or those in need. Forgive us, O God. Re-awaken us to your purposes and re-ignite our commitment to pursue them for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)
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.**

Words of Assurance

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Cross of Christ is foolishness to many, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. By this power, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God for the wisdom to live as forgiven people.

May the Peace of the Lord be with you. Let us take few moments to greet each other and share our peace.

Praise Song: BOP 201 We come to ask your forgiveness

Prayer for children

Prayer for Illumination:

God of wisdom, you speak through the Law and the prophets to teach us how to live. Send us your Holy Spirit to teach us truth for our times and wisdom for our lives, through Christ, your life-giving Word. Amen.

- First reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- Second reading: Psalm 19 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: John 2:13-22

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

Sermon: Temple cleansing

In today's John passage, what is Jesus doing? One day, Jesus suddenly walked into the temple and interrupted everybody. Who were there? The people came to worship God. What is the matter? Why did Jesus overturn the tables and cast out the people and animals in the temple, in this way?

God gave instructions how to worship God. There are different types of worship and people are supposed to bring their own sacrifices according to their requirements.

There were burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, purification offering, and reparation offering, and more. Each offering had different way to sacrifice their offerings. For some, they needed animals. For some, they needed their grains or bread. And for others, they needed wine. This implies that they were supposed to prepare their own offerings beforehand.

The Passover of the Jews was near when Jesus went to the temple. It was a big event. It is a time remembering God who called out the entire people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt. Therefore, many people came to the temple in Jerusalem to observe the Passover.

V14, when Jesus went into the temple, **“In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables.”**

Because some people lived far away from Jerusalem, where the temple was, it was difficult to carry their sacrificing grains or drag their animals. It was not convenient. Therefore, slowly, they built up the system of buying and selling sacrificing animals and grains. With the development of the market system, the worshipper now does not have to bring their animals from their homes. They just bring their money and buy their sacrificial animals and offer them to God.

How convenient the system was! It was beneficial for the worshippers because they didn't have to put so much effort and energy to bring their own animals. It created great business, also, so people lived near the temple made good money out of providing convenient services for worshippers.

It was good for everybody. This system was brilliant. The religious leaders did not oppose it. If they disagreed, the market place couldn't stand.

Everyone could find their own balance in this temple market system.

In human point of view, can we find any reason why Jesus cleansed the temple? In other words, why did Jesus despise the temple market system where everyone finds their convenience and happiness?

God told his own people to bring their own sacrifices. **Leviticus 22:21, “When anyone offers a sacrifice of well-being to the Lord, in fulfillment of a vow or a freewill-offering, from the herd or from the flock, to be acceptable it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or having a discharge or an itch or scabs – these you shall not offer to the Lord or put any of them on the altar as offerings by fire to the Lord.”**

First instruction is from the herd or from the flock. It means, you bring your own sacrificial animals from your own.

Second was, it must be acceptable without defect.

This tells us somethings. To select the choicest animals for the sacrifice, you would examine your animals from time to time. This causes us to have the idea of giving God the perfect animals, best ones. It could be a daily routine. It sets God in the centre of their lives.

Imagine that you are going to the temple market and buy an animal. How easy it is.

But, imagine that you are raising your own animals, you choose the best one, you examine the animal with care and you bring it to the temple. How inconvenient and how much more effort and energy do you have to put!?! But, how much more do you have to think about God? In other words, what is the centre of your hearts? The comfort as you worship God? Or the sincerity.

For Valentine's Day, which one would you like between a box of chocolate or a carefully written love letter? Some might say I choose chocolate, but which one is prepared with wholeheartedness and love and passion and care and truthfulness?

God does not want money from us. He is not interested in what you are giving, but how.

1 Samuel 15:22, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”

Saul became the first king of Israel. They gave sacrifice to the Lord before battle. The prophet Samuel told King Saul that he would be there to give sacrifice in a certain time, so that they can go out and fight in the battle. However, all the soldiers were waiting for the prophet and looking at the enemies. As time passed, they were more afraid of the fight. And the prophet Samuel did not show up. King Saul was able to see that their confidence was going low and low. In order to boost them up, King Saul decided to officiate the worship himself. His focus was on giving comfort to the terrified soldiers. He used worship as a tool, but give God some animals as offerings.

At that time, the prophet Samuel came and said this. Does God really take pleasures in animal sacrifices? Yes, but much much more from obedience and sincere worship. Your obedience is much more pleasing to God. Obedience is much more important than giving sacrifices.

When Jesus stepped in the temple or the temple market. What is the focus of the people?

Sincere worship for God? OR Offering sacrifices for the sake of offering sacrifice itself?

Do they have the obedience God required them to have or do they only have the outward appearance of offering worship?

Years ago, at the time of offering, I didn't have any money, but I had some **TTC tokens**. Do you remember TTC tokens? This is like a bus ticket. I wanted to give God something good, but didn't have money. So, I placed all the tokens I had and I had to walk to school for an entire week. I

in terms of church management, tokens were useless. Tokens doesn't pay any bills. But, in the eyes of God, how would God see the heart and the times I had to walk because I gave all I had.

About ten years ago, when I was ministering youth and young adults, one person came to me and said, “I want to give some offering, but I don't have any. I hate the time of offering.”

So I told the person, “Consider your time as an offering. Your heart, your love, your passion, your service as a choir member, a singer, usher, or kitchen help as your offering.”

Ever since that time, my perspective of offering is not only money, but everything we bring to the Lord.

Now, back to the temple or the temple market.

What do you see? Do you see the people seeking their convenience, not God?

Do you see the people who try to make business out of it, not offering their hearts, time and energy? Do you see the people who are self-centred, not God-centred?

Jesus wanted us to focus on God.

This season of Lent is the time for us to adjust our focus from ourselves to God.

If Jesus sees our hearts today, would he overturn all the tables like he did in the temple or would he be pleased? Let us take our hearts and give it to him. Let us offer to God our church, the body of Christ, the people of God, our hearts together. May God be worshipped and praised and his name be lifted up through this time as we remember our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and adjust our focus from us to God.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 210 Man of sorrows, wondrous name

Prayer for the people:

God who seeks our hearts, thank you that Jesus cleansed the temple. Jesus cast out sacrificial animals because they only focused on meeting the requirements, not able to see the true meaning it has. God commends us rules and instructions not because he wants us to have difficult time, but because he wants us to have him in our hearts. In this time of lent, help us turn our hearts and focus toward you. Fill us with your love and joy from your salvation.

There are many people and places crying out for help. Help us be mindful of them. There are extreme poverty in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. There are extreme fear and injustice in Gaza strip and Ukraine. Merciful God, have mercy upon them. Raise your people so we might actively embrace them in our hearts and send help and go to help them. Loving God, help them.

Also, save your church. Many are aging and worrying about survival. You didn't call us to just survive, but thrive and be the light for the world. The light is very dim and the light is flickering. But, still, we are the light shining upon darkness. Through light, help us connect people to God. And also, we are not only the light, but we are fire. Small fire can burn the whole mountain. Help us be fire in our lives, so let us impact our surroundings. You are the Head and the Lord of your church. Lead and guide us.

We all need you. Each person has different prayer needs. Powerful and loving God, you listen to our prayers and worries. You miss no details. As we pray to you, help us align our desires to yours.

With all our hearts, we want to be present before you. Help us rest in you and help us recharge through this worship. Thank you for being our Lord and giving us life. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering:

Jesus grew angry at the money changers in the temple, reminding God's people that our offerings are not just financial transactions. What we give expresses our commitment to God's ways. As you present your offering, consider what commitment to God's purposes your gift expresses. Let us offer our hearts, time, service, and love to God. Let us praise and glorify God with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

Lord Jesus, you challenge your followers to offer God commitment and gratitude. Receive our gifts as an expression of our commitment to you and your ministry. Use all that we can give to offer hope and healing in the world you love. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 637 Take my life, and let it be consecrate

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. What does God want from you? Is it your money? Does he want your time? Maybe yes, but God wants your heart. People in Jesus' time, they gave money and time to God. But, Jesus, still overturn the tables. Heart matters. Let us give our hearts to the Lord our God through our daily lives.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.