

Reflection - 03/07/21

John 2:13-22 and 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Lent - time for contemplation, prayerful reflection, preparation. Looking towards remarkable new beginnings. What (to do) next?

To start again with fresh eyes, with a renewed sense of purpose, tuned in for direction. Sometimes extreme action is needed to become grounded, to open up to new possibilities and growth.

Clean slate, clear the temple.

Corruption, off course, breaking covenants/commandments.

Sacred space defiled.

But when Church is functioning as a business, a well-oiled machine - it needs shaking up.

It is imperative that we ask ourselves and hold each other accountable to examine how we are measuring up.

We need to ask ourselves "are we the money lenders"? Do we uphold commerce within the church?

It would be comfortable and easy to assume the righteous position. It can even be inspiring to want to follow Jesus and stir things up - but might Jesus be addressing us? Jesus is criticizing those with only institutional interest (eg preachers!) We need to strike a balance of institutional wisdom and courageous, prophetic action. Because we consider him "our" savior, we assume he is perpetually well pleased with us. Jesus is for us, and with us, yes, but he is also speaking to us, even against us. He is challenging us all - Jew and Gentile - to overcome fear and speak prophetically.

When we think we have it figured out (Want to make God laugh? Make a plan) we probably have it backwards.

If so, what is the appropriate recourse?

How would God feel about us right now?

What do we want to do differently?

Today's reading demonstrates that anger is justifiable when faced with the state of the world. When examining the enormous, and preventable injustices here and afar. Our places of worship are not exempt from this anger (psalms, God of all times to all people)

Corinthians - God's steadfastness love - wisdom - human folly. Our decisions reflect whether we care only about extending the lifetime of church, or ourselves, or will we follow a God who seems foolish to those held in esteem? Will we speak truth to power, at the risk of sounding

overly simplistic or downright ridiculous? Paul believed that flowery fanciful language was less “real” than more blunt, but encouraged embracing the challenging theology of the cross. Paul also happened to be falling out of favour with the elite, educated. Paul was calling followers of Christ to embrace the paradoxical beliefs of Christ overcoming death, of God’s wisdom seeming like human folly, and of the fanciest arguments and speeches, the highest of human wisdom, being false.

“For Christians, the cross declares that we embrace truth when lies seem easier, gentleness when force is attractive, justice for the oppressed when maintaining the status quo would be simpler, generosity when hoarding would be more comfortable, forgiveness when a hateful grudge would taste so good.” (Jeff Paschal)

The temple Jesus came to appeared to fulfill its function, but it had forgotten its purpose. No heart. The ways of the world had leached into the temple, even though the authorities believed they were doing right. They would never knowingly oppose God or intentionally violate God’s purposes. (W Hulitt Gloer.)

Lent - time to ask whether we may be “destroying” the temple. The danger of misunderstanding can leave us following a Jesus of our own design, a Jesus with whom we are quite comfortable. (W Hulitt Gloer.)

Following Jesus can be unnerving and uncomfortable. It can require counter-cultural work. Jesus offers us a glimpse of things to come, of the unexpected. Not even the tomb can hold him. How amazing is that?

We must also be aware of John’s agenda in recording this passage. He aims to replace the temple with Jesus’ body. “The Jews” are upheld as misunderstanding Jesus, of having the wrong priorities and of being in the wrong. Prophecy fulfillment as supercessionism - anti-semitism. We are not better than or a solution to Jewish faith and people. Remember our roots, and how much we have in common. Appreciate our differences. Too easy to blame Jewish people, to dismiss other faiths. We have to look beyond, to be true to our faith.

Jesus’ story culminates at the cross but does not end there. We must come to hold the whole of the story to begin to see an adequate and full understanding of Jesus. Otherwise we may end up building a temple of our own which works against the very purposes to which it is dedicated.

Jesus gives hope to those whose gifts and being do not fit in. Wholeness of the resurrection. Denies death in the final world.

Our bodies, our work, our meditations. How might we embody Christ’s call? When we give up fear of what others may think, and instead consider what others may need, we too can throw out the money lenders, let go of our selfishness and live into this call to love beyond all boundaries.

Covid, a time of forced change - how do we want to adapt? What will we change from here?

Accessibility - online, phone tree.

Affirming - live out loud our welcome.

Anti-Racism (after black history month, with workshops to look forward to)

Reconciliation

Intergenerational dialogue (worship team, coffee area, podcast, all learning zoom, connecting)

Continued reconsideration, listening to histories, what we missed before, what/who is left out?

Invite you to take up a spiritual practice. What better time than Covid? How might we connect with the divine, with the root of our faith? What might we be called to shake up, change, or challenge? Gifts of challenge, hope, working through despair with our God. Not easy, but satisfying. Do what is right or what is easy? Challenge ourselves to move beyond our preconceived notions - what we have been taught to believe - and find that unbelievable ending to a story full of surprises.