

Study Guide for March 4, 2018

Theme: Remodeling (Restoration)

Readings: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

This week's message shows us an uncomfortable side of Jesus; the human Jesus cleansing the Temple of those who were taking advantage of the laws to keep people from coming in to worship God. In short, Jesus does a little remodeling. But the Lectionary readings also give us blueprints to begin construction in our own life, to be rebuilt to the specifications of God's faithfulness and righteousness using Jesus as our cornerstone.

Lent is a time to look at our spiritual structures and do the necessary repairs and renovations that will be more in line with what God wants from us, and not just what we want from God or others. I hope that you are using these sacred days to look in all the nooks and crannies of your life, and are asking God to help you live faithfully throughout the process.

READ: Exodus 20:1-17

The recitation of the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue, should sound familiar. But it's important to notice that it is God – not Moses – who is doing the speaking to the Israelites. Hearing directly from the Divine, I'm sure, left quite an impact on them as they made their way through the desert. Also take note of the order in which these commandments appear. They teach us how to rebuild a right relationship with God (the first four commandments) so we can be in right relationship with each other (the remaining six). I invite you to read them without placing shame or guilt on yourself or others. These directives are not meant to micro-manage our lives, but to lead us towards discipleship and formation so we might be better able to live in a way that God intended for us all to live.

Q: Which commandment stands out to you as something that is easy to accomplish? And which ones stand out as being impossible for you?

Q: In what area's of your life do you feel in-sync with God's righteousness? And which area's in your life still need work to be more in line with God's directive for you?

Q: Is there a small Lenten practice that might help you live in better relationship with God and others?

READ: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

In this letter, Paul is trying to mend a divided church in Corinth, where the wealthy members, lured by the Corinthian ideal of clever oratory, are tempted to segregate from their poorer counterparts and create their own ideal of church. Paul recognizes that they are missing the point. He forces them—and us—to stare directly into the shame and tragedy of the cross and, in so doing, put all humankind on equal footing. I invite you to

read this selection twice, first to get a sense of the argument Paul is trying to make and second to see how it might be used as a blueprint for remodeling our churches to make them more inviting to others.

- Q:** What word or phrase did the Spirit place on your heart that you wish to ponder this week in Lent?
- Q:** Are there divisions in your life that threaten to keep you away from people you love?
- Q:** How can Jesus (or Paul) help you see God's view of things as you look to rebuild right relationships and solidarity with God and with others?

Read: John 2:13-22; Matthew 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-46; Mark 11:15-17; Psalm 69

You will notice this passage is in all four gospels, which tells us that the event was 1) most likely true and 2) tells us something important about the Kingdom of God. In each reading the story differs a little, but Jesus' passion is pretty much the same. He comes in with a purpose: to disrupt the corruption and zeal that has swept over God's sacred house. When he is confronted, Jesus radically states that the temple, under construction for many years, can be razed and reconstructed in merely three days. Only in looking back, through the lens of Jesus' death and resurrection, would the statement make sense to his disciples and to us: that Jesus as Christ had replaced the earthly temple once and for all.

One thing to note: The activity Jesus disrupted necessary for the functioning of the temple. The moneychangers were necessary because the money in the temple had to be free of idols as God demanded. Likewise, God also stated the sacrificial animals had to be blemish-free, and a variety had to be offered for affordability purposes.

- Q:** In reading the four accounts, what stands out as different and/or the same?
- Q:** How do you picture Jesus' actions? Begin with the point of view of a disciple, then of a merchant, and finally as a religious leader.
- Q:** If Jesus were to walk into Congress or the White House how might he react? Do you believe this was a political move?

Slow Read: **Psalm 19** is filled with lovely imagery of God. What word or verse stands out that shows you a perfect image of God in relationship to where you are now. Write it down and reminds yourself of the vision each night before you go to bed.

Prayer: Lord God, by your sacred words you have shown me the righteousness of your sacred heart. By your Son, you have taught me how live faithfully in your righteousness. Today, send me your Spirit, to guide me in those ways so that I might be remodeled in the image of Jesus Christ, Amen.