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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Third Sunday in Lent |
| Year B RCL |

Exodus 20:1-17

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

Psalm 19

**The Collect**

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Exodus 20:1-17**

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

**The Response**

**Psalm 19**

***Caeli enarrant***

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, \*  
and the firmament shows his handiwork.

2 One day tells its tale to another, \*  
and one night imparts knowledge to another.

3 Although they have no words or language, \*  
and their voices are not heard,

4 Their sound has gone out into all lands, \*  
and their message to the ends of the world.

5 In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; \*  
it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber;  
it rejoices like a champion to run its course.

6 It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens  
and runs about to the end of it again; \*  
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.

7 The law of the Lord is perfect  
and revives the soul; \*  
the testimony of the Lord is sure  
and gives wisdom to the innocent.

8 The statutes of the Lord are just  
and rejoice the heart; \*  
the commandment of the Lord is clear  
and gives light to the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean  
and endures for ever; \*  
the judgments of the Lord are true  
and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,  
more than much fine gold, \*  
sweeter far than honey,  
than honey in the comb.

11 By them also is your servant enlightened, \*  
and in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can tell how often he offends? \*  
cleanse me from my secret faults.

13 Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;  
let them not get dominion over me; \*  
then shall I be whole and sound,  
and innocent of a great offense.

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.

**The Epistle**

**1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

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. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,   
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

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? 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. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

**The Gospel**

**John 2:13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 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. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 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.

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

We read these words of scripture in the knowledge that Lent is a good time to be honest. I mean, don’t get me wrong, every moment is a good time to be honest, but Lent in particular is known as a time to take off the gloves with which we deal with ourselves and do some self-examination. It is not a time to sit smugly. and think “Here is a church, and well, there are no money changers here.” And it is not a time to think that I (or you or anyone) is being prophetic, which is not about predicting the future, but which is instead about correcting ourselves and others to be in line with God’s desires—not a time to think we already are in line with God’s desires, because we made it to church today. It is a time to take the scripture on board, to stay with it and study it. It is a time to hold the mirror up to what is on the inside of each of us, and for us to worry less about outward appearances in that mirror. It is a time to look at God’s desires for God’s world, God’s desires for God’s people; it is a time to understand Jesus as prophetic and understand what that means for us.

This Sunday’s readings give us an abundance of riches, riches by which to focus our lifes. Simple as they are, one could spend the rest of one’s life and only scratch the surface of what has been written on what Christians call the Ten Commandments.

The Jewish scholars of Torah teach us that rather than being called “commandments,” that these are not laws and as one would think about a police system enforcing; instead Jews call them the 10 utterances or 10 words. Contrary to what you may think, the phrasing as ten utterances or ten words is not at all to diminish, but instead to give them more power. These are not something to get around or to avoid; these utterances are to be embraced as how God wants us to live.

Following these words, having fear of God, is a way by which we are protected and cared for; we are protected from wandering away from God. The way to live fully in God is to live caring for others as God cares for us.

And yet, we will wander. And it is likewise Christ who protects us and cares for us, who does this by offering salvation. Proclaiming and living Christ crucified is as countercultural across the world now as it was in Corinth when Paul was writing his letters and orating. And this salvation through Jesus Christ, this care is offered for all, for the foolish, the brilliant, it matters not.

It may be self-evident to you, or you may wonder what Jesus turning over tables has to do with the ten utterances. Jesus takes these ten utterances at face value- “Then God spoke all these words.” If one were to take these words seriously, then zeal comes naturally when other people use the holy place, the temple as a market place, particularly when they presumably occupy the only place the Gentiles could pray. We know from the synoptic Gospels that there were shady dealing taking place, “making my Father’s house a den of robbers.” So cheating or stealing and dishonoring God all in temple? That will get you upset if you take the words seriously, and then, it is no surprise that Jesus is full of zeal.

But how does Jesus’s zeal translate to today? Because it is never just about what went on 2000 years ago,

So… how does Jesus turn over our tables? Chances are there are practices in which we think we are doing God’s work. Are we are attached to the practices? are these practices actually doing God’s work? How is it in our work places or our homes that we think we are doing the call of God, but are more operating for our own pride?

To take the utterances seriously involves taking them broadly. The poet Ganga White has this to say, and you will see why I share this poem.

**What If?**

What if our religion was each other?

If our practice was our life?

If prayer was our words?

What if the Temple was the Earth?

If forests were our church?

If holy water—the rivers, lakes and oceans?

What if meditation was our relationships?

If the Teacher was life?

If wisdom was self-knowledge?

If love was the center of our being

*~ Ganga White*

And so I’ll ask some additional questions for just a few of the ten utterances, and you could continue this exercise at home too:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart: Have you fed the hungry today?

Remember the sabbath and keep it holy: what does sabbath mean to you? what are your plans for the rest of the day?

Do not kill—Do our actions or lack of actions, protect other people’s lives?

Honor your parents- what does honor mean to you? that you didn’t say anything mean?

Jesus knows why he walked the earth, why he turned over tables, he did so to be raised up, and to raise us up. Jesus is accompanied by God, God is in Jesus and God is in us too. If that is Good News, and I believe it is, then now… a Lenten time of self-examination is not a dour time, nor a time to beat ourselves up, but instead a time to examine and deal with where we fall short. It may seem like a never ending exercise, but God has all the time in the world. Let us also have zeal to get rid of everything that separates us from our God and from all for whom God cares, which would be, you know, the world…for the way to live fully in God is to live caring for others as God cares for us, for this is loving the Lord your God with all your heart.