

**Sunday 3rd March –
Morning Worship
Third Sunday of Lent**

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>



Gathering and Greeting

O Lord open our lips

And our mouths shall proclaim your praise

Hear our voice, O Lord, according to your faithful love,

According to your judgement give us life.

Opening Prayer

Blessed are you, God of compassion and mercy,
to you be praise and glory forever.

In the darkness of our sin, your light breaks forth like the dawn
and your healing springs up for deliverance.

As we rejoice in the gift of your saving help,
sustain us with your bountiful Spirit
and open our lips to sing your praise.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

Hymn – Take, O take me as I am (sing three times)

Take, O take me as I am;
summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.

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Saying Sorry to God

Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess we have failed you as did your first disciples.
We ask for your mercy and your help.

Our selfishness betrays you:
Lord, forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

We fail to share the pain of your suffering:
Lord, forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

We run away from those who abuse you:
Lord, forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

We are afraid of being known to belong to you:
Lord, forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Anthem - Stay with me - Taizé

Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray, watch and pray.
Stay here and keep watch with me. Watch and pray.
Watch and pray not to give way to temptation.
Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray, watch and pray.

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Readings by Ann Griffiths

Exodus 20:1-17

20 Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery; ³ you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ 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. ⁵ 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, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹ For six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

¹² Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ You shall not murder.

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ You shall not steal.

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

John 2:13-22

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!'

¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰ The Jews then said, 'This temple

has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

²² 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.

Reflection by Rev Chris Westgarth

So what's actually going on in our gospel reading...Some people use this passage to justify their opinion that secular things cannot or should not happen in a sacred building...

But Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body (John 2:21). The religious people of that day did not get that. They didn't understand they had never heard anyone speak like this...

They were just going about their normal everyday lives... It was, for them, business as usual, they were running on auto pilot that day. But Jesus came to the temple. Animals were being bought and sold. Coins were being changed. All the usual people had all their usual places and usual roles.

This is one of those stories that we need to put to one side a couple of things, things that distract, in order that we can really see and understand what is going on. I don't think this story is simply about Jesus getting angry. Yes, Jesus got angry, but he never sinned...Jesus' anger was righteous anger. It's ok to get angry, however we need to be careful not to sin. But there's more to this story than that. And I don't think it's about the animals or the moneychangers being in the temple. Jesus surely knew they would be there. He grew up as a faithful Jew going to the temple. He didn't show up this day and say, "Wow! Now there's a surprise... there are animals and moneychangers here. I didn't know they'd be here...this is wrong." The animals and moneychangers had always been there. That's how the system worked. It was normal for them to be there.

I think Jesus went to the temple that day for one purpose; to throw out and overturn, to challenge the idea of normality or of running on auto pilot. There are times when we need the tables of our life overturned and the animals thrown out. It's just so easy to fall into the trap of normality.

Have we ever run on autopilot... we arrive but we're not really there. That's 'normality'. Have we ever smiled that I'm-good-and-everything-is-fine smile but behind the smile there's emptiness, we feel hollow, and our heart's breaking? Surely that's carrying on with normality, putting a brave face on... Or maybe we wake up in the morning and we are just as tired as we were when we went to bed the night before. Sometimes we can look at the issues and concerns but we're stuck on auto pilot or on the treadmill of life. We're busy but not really getting anywhere. There's no depth or meaning, only business as usual. Running on auto pilot can happen anywhere: in friendships, marriages, parenting, work, church.

The 'things' are not, however, the problem. They are the symptom in the same way that the animals and moneychangers in the temple were not the problem. They are the symptoms of something deeper going on. The problem is not so much in the temple as it is in the heart. That deeper issue is, I think, what is it that gives rise 'normality' or 'auto pilot'. Sometimes it's about our fear. We're fearful about what is happening in our life or the uncertainty of the future and we want some type of security and predictability so we can keep on doing the same old things. Being on auto pilot is predictable and steady but it creates only the illusion of security. Sometimes 'auto pilot' is a symptom of our grief and sorrow. Something has been lost. We can't get back the life we want so we switch or cling to auto pilot because it's familiar and we want some stability. Other times we are so busy and worn out making a living that life turns into one task after another, one appointment after another, a never ending to do list, and on auto pilot. Maybe we've taken people, relationships, and things for granted. Maybe we've lost our sense of gratitude, wonder, or mystery.

I do not say any of that as a criticism or judgment of you, me, or anyone else. I'm just saying what often happens to us. What has running on auto pilot looked like in my life, in your life?

There are thousands of reasons and ways in which we fall into the trap of running on auto pilot. When we run on auto pilot we can forget. We forget that we really are the temple of God's presence. We forget that all of creation is the residence of God. We forget that in whatever direction we might turn, there is the face of God gazing upon us. And

as soon as we forget those things about ourselves, each other, or the world, life becomes running on auto pilot. Life becomes boringly normal!

I think that's what happened in the temple. They didn't see themselves or one another as the true temple of God. It was all about the human-built temple, the animals, and the coins. They had forgotten that God was more interested in them than in their festivals and that God wanted them more than their offerings.

When we forget that we are the temple of God life can easily become a series of transactions. Relationships and intimacy are lost. Priorities get rearranged. Making a living replaces living a life. Life becomes a marketplace rather than a place for meeting the holy in ourselves and one another. And it's running on auto pilot.

That's what Jesus is overturning and driving out of the temple. In the gospel according to St. John this happens at the very beginning of Jesus ministry. The Word became flesh (John 1:14), water became wine (John 2:9), and now the temple is becoming human. And it does not stop here. Throughout the rest of the gospel Jesus will be interrupting our running on auto pilot, our normality. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well or about the paralysed man who spent thirty-eight years on a mat (John 5:1-9)?

And then there's Lazarus (John 11:1-44). He's been dead three days already. Martha knows the smell of death is present. Jesus challenges the normality of life and death... "Take away the stone," he says. Death will not have the final word. "Lazarus, come out."

And let's not forget the five thousand plus people who are empty and hungry (John 6:1-13). Philip is sure there's not enough. There's no way to feed them. Empty and hungry people... this is normality... But Jesus has other plans. Two fish and five loaves are more than enough.

Everyone was satisfied and twelve baskets were filled with leftovers. Over and over again Jesus is interrupting, disrupting, overturning, and throwing out the running on auto pilot, the normality of life. Living life on auto pilot or in the normal or mundane destroys our ability to see and participate in the holy that is already present in and among us.

The Word became flesh so that the temple might become human.

Jesus continues to overturn and throw out complacency because the

truth is there are still Samaritan women waiting at the well in our world today. There are still lame people, there are still empty and hungry people, there are still people held captive to sin and they waiting to be made alive, to hear the good news.

Maybe for you today this isn't about other people. Maybe you are the women at the well. Maybe you are empty and hungry today. Maybe you need to be called to life. Maybe the normality of life needs to be interrupted today.

Regardless of who we are, what we've done or left undone, or how we see or judge our life, we are the temple of God and there is one who stands in the temple of our life interrupting boringly predictable..

So...what does the temple of our life need today? What animals need to be driven out? What tables in our life need to be overturned?

Let's say no to the boring predictable life... let's remember our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...

Affirmation of faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.**

**Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.**

**He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.**

**Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:**

**that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

cf Philippians 2.6-11

Prayers of Intercession led by John Crang

As God has called us, so we have come together to pray:

Lord, we pray for the Church, the body of Christ. At this time in our earthly pilgrimage, we thank you for those who share this journey with us. In our conversations and our life together, give us the grace to recognise that despite our differences, in your Spirit we are one. Help us to overcome those issues that can confound our unity and help us to heal any persistent divisions that get in the way.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

The heavens are telling the glory of God •

and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

One day pours out its song to another •

and one night unfolds knowledge to another.

They have neither speech nor language •

and their voices are not heard,

Yet their sound has gone out into all lands •

and their words to the ends of the world.

Psalm 19.1-4

Lord, we pray for the world in all its beauty and richness. Help us to share our planet's food and resources, to care for the well-being of its people and to work for peace and justice for all.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Gracious God, we pray for peace, justice and reconciliation throughout the world. Govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of fear and greed, to be subject to your just and gentle rule. In those areas of tension and conflict we pray for the honouring of human rights and for the relief of the oppressed. We pray for those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution that we may all recognise our fraternity and give thanks for all that is gracious in the lives of men, women and children. We pray for aid-workers and peace-makers and for all who work to bring help.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for our local communities and for all people in their daily life and work. We pray for the young and the elderly, for families, and all who are alone. We pray for our medical services, for the hospitals with their myriad expertise, and for local GP, physiotherapy and dental practices. We give thanks for human skill and creativity and all that reveals your loving provision for your creation.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Lord, we pray for those we love, especially our family and friends, those we see each day and those we miss. Help us to cherish one another as we live in the loving way you have taught us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We remember all those who have died in the peace of Christ, both those who have confessed the faith and those whose faith is known to you alone. Grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Trusting in the compassion of God,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.**

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

1 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
self-denying, death defying,
thou to Calvary didst go.

3 Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy:
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

Notices

Conclusion

Christ give us grace to grow in holiness,
to deny ourselves, take up our cross,
and follow him;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.