

Third Sunday of Lent, March 7, 2021

Greeting: God is good **all the time**. All the time **God is good**.

Question of the Day:

What is UMCOR? a) United Methodist Commission on Race
 b) United Methodist Committee on Reconciliation
 c) United Methodist Council of Restitution
 d) United Methodist Committee on Relief

Call to Worship

The message of the cross sounds foolish to the world;

but to us it is the power of God!

We proclaim the scandal of Christ crucified.

The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom,
and the weakness of God is stronger than our strength.

We bring worship and praise to God!

Prayer of Invocation

God of glory, we come to you because all our knowledge and discernment is not enough to give meaning to our lives. All the pieces of our busy days need a center, and we have come to see that center in the “foolishness” of the cross. We long for the wholeness only you can offer. By your Holy Spirit draw us closer to you. Amen.

Hymn “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship”

Exodus 20:1-17 *New Revised Standard Version*

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 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, the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor 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 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.

John 2:13-22 *The Message*

When the Passover Feast, celebrated each spring by the Jews, was about to take place, Jesus traveled up to Jerusalem. He found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves. The loan sharks were also there in full strength.

Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple, stampeding the sheep and cattle, upending the tables of the loan sharks, spilling coins left and right. He told the dove merchants, “Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a shopping mall!” That’s when his disciples remembered the Scripture, “Zeal for your house consumes me.”

But the Jews were upset. They asked, “What credentials can you present to justify this?” Jesus answered, “Tear down this Temple and in three days I’ll put it back together.”

They were indignant: “It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you’re going to rebuild it in three days?” But Jesus was talking about his body as the Temple. Later, after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this. They then put two and two together and believed both what was written in Scripture and what Jesus had said.

I Corinthians 1:18-25 *The Message*

The Message that points to Christ on the Cross seems like sheer silliness to those hellbent on destruction, but for those on the way of salvation it makes perfect sense. This is the way God works, and most powerfully as it turns out. It’s written,

I’ll turn conventional wisdom on its head,

I’ll expose so-called experts as crackpots.

So where can you find someone truly wise, truly educated, truly intelligent in this day and age? Hasn’t God exposed it all as pretentious nonsense? Since the world in all its fancy wisdom never had a clue when it came to knowing God, God in his wisdom took delight in using what the world considered dumb – *preaching*, of all things! – to bring those who trust him into the way of salvation.

While Jews clamor for miraculous demonstrations and Greeks go in for philosophical wisdom, we go right on proclaiming Christ, the Crucified. Jews treat this like an *anti*-miracle – and Greeks pass it off as absurd. But to us who are personally called by God himself – both Jews and Greeks – Christ is God’s ultimate miracle and wisdom all wrapped up in one. Human wisdom is so tinny, so impotent, next to the seeming absurdity of God. Human strength can’t begin to compete with God’s “weakness.”

Response: *The Word of God, for the people of God! Thanks be to God!*

Time of Prayer

How Is It With Your Soul?

Call to Confession

Despite all that God has taught us, we still act foolishly; we are still weak. In the cross of Christ, we find forgiveness and grace. We confess our sins, trusting in God’s wisdom and strength rather than our own.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, forgive us for worshiping anyone or anything except you; keep us faithful. Forgive us for failing to honor all our relationships – with those closest to us and those who are distant neighbors. Help us to speak words of blessing and kindness, rather than words that belittle or destroy. Turn us away from violence, falsehood, and selfishness. Forgive us for thinking everything depends on our efforts and power, for you are the God who made us, led us out of slavery, and have brought us into the community of faith. Help us to depend on you alone and to rest in your peace.

(Time of Silent Prayer)

Brothers and sisters, in Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and coming again, we are forgiven and set free to live in faithfulness with God and one another!

Thanks be to God!

Answer to the Question of the Day

Time of Offering *Thank you to everyone for your faithful generosity.*

Offering Prayer

We bring our offerings, O God, not to buy your favor, but to express our gratitude, not to support an institution, but to further your mission. May we be zealous in your service, sacrificial for love's sake, and eager to embrace your word in our everyday living. Amen.

Sermon "Too Simple" Rev. Joyce Rich

Holy Communion *Have your bread and cup ready.*

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. . . . And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. . . . And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us . . . Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray together:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sharing of the Elements *Use the bread and cup that you have prepared.*

The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

Prayer After Receiving

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commission and Blessing

Disciples of Jesus, embrace the "foolishness" of the cross, and follow wherever our Lord may lead.

**May the blessing of God, Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit, uphold us on the way.**

Amen. **And Amen.**

Hymn "Here Is Bread, Here Is Wine"

Announcements; Readings For Next Week: Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21; Ephesians 2:1-10

*Liturgical resources drawn from: **Led by Love: Worship Resources for Year B**, Lavon Bayler © 1996 United Church Press; **Feasting on the Word: Liturgies for Year B, Volume I**, Kimberly Bracken Long, editor © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press; and **The United Methodist Book of Worship** © 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House.*