

Notes for Next Sunday

Third Sunday in Lent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Exodus 20:1-17). God reminds His people that He graciously rescued them in the exodus, impresses them with His majesty and presence, and establishes a covenant with them to guide their service as a “kingdom of priests.” Human sin means that the Law, a reflection of God’s own righteousness, always condemns us. Therefore, the Lord comforts His people by reminding them first of His mercy toward them. He made them His people, a blessing He extends also to us (1Pt 2:9–10).

Epistle (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

Paul has been arguing that reliance on one’s skill as a speaker can rob the cross of Christ of its power. He now sets out to cure the Corinthians of their fascination with rhetoric. After all, they should know that no matter how well they dress up the word of the cross, the world will always find it unpleasant. For the world marches to a different drummer. Its enthusiasm always is for whatever seems attractive and successful. Its basic orientation is toward what has aptly been called “the theology of glory.” But now, in opposition to the world’s lust for glamour, success, and “image,” Paul sets forth “the word [the theology] of the cross” (1:18–25). Only that sobering word will provide the Corinthians with a basis for overcoming their divisions and restoring their fellowship in Christ. (CC p. 64)

Gospel (John 2:13-22). With holy zeal, Jesus cleanses the temple, which has been turned into a marketplace, and He predicts His resurrection to those questioning His authority. When we disrespect God’s Word and sacred things, He calls us to repentance. Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection reveal God’s heart, which is zealous for those He loves.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words: ²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. ⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¹²“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land 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 give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” ¹⁸When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹and said to Moses,

“Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” ²⁰ Moses said to the people, **“Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”** ²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

20:4 idol in the form of anything. Because God has no visible form, any idol intended to resemble him would be a sinful misrepresentation of him. Since other gods are not to be worshiped, making idols of them would be equally sinful. (CSB)

20:5 jealous God. God will not put up with rivalry or unfaithfulness. Usually his “jealousy” concerns Israel and assumes the covenant relationship (analogous to marriage) and the Lord’s exclusive right to possess Israel and to claim her love and allegiance. Actually, jealousy is part of the vocabulary of love. (CSB)

20:5 of the fathers on the children. Sin, which is inherited (Ps 51:5), corrupts and affects families. Consider how children often repeat the sins of the parents and then suffer the consequences. Our relationship with God is both individual and corporate. However, note two things: God pictures His mercy here as being much greater than His wrath. Every person stands before God in judgment based on his own relationship with God, not another’s (cf Dt 24:16). (TLSB)

20:5 to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. † Those Israelites who blatantly violate God’s covenant and thus show that they reject the Lord as their King will bring down judgment on themselves and their households that follow in the footsteps of their idolatrous forebears —households were usually extended to “three or four” generations. (CSB)

20:6 showing love. This means not only forgiving their sins and saving their souls, but often making them instrumental in leading others, especially their children and children’s children, to become pious, and the means of salvation to their posterity to many generations. (CB)

20:6 a thousand (generations) of those. Notice that God’s love and faithfulness outweighs His punishing wrath. God’s anger extends to the fourth generation, but God’s love and faithfulness extends to the thousandth generation. (LL)

20:8 Sabbath. The Sabbath was a weekly reminder of Passover, just as for Christians Sunday is a weekly reminder of Easter. Comes from the verb meaning to “cease, rest, a cessation for religious purposes from the normal activity of work. On the Sabbath nobody is to undertake usual work. People are not live as if time is their own, to do with it as they please. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

20:12 so that you may live long. By obeying the Lord and keeping his decrees, individual Israelites would enjoy long life in the land, and the people as a whole would enjoy a long national existence in the land.

20:13 murder. The unauthorized taking of human life, whether premeditated, in anger, or by carelessness. (TLSB)

20:15 steal. Every man has certain things which God has given him and which, by right from God belong to himself. They are his property. To take them away, or without just cause deprive him of them, is theft, and exposes those who do it to be excluded from heaven. (CB)

EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” ²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For

since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. ²⁶ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

1:18 foolishness. The English word “moron” is derived from this word. (CC p. 62)

1:18 to those who are perishing. Those who see only foolishness in the cross deny its power to save them from eternal destruction. (TLSB)

1:18 power of God. The cross is the instrument of God's salvation. (TLSB)

1:19 the wise. Aristides said that on every street in Corinth one met a so-called wise man, who had his own solutions to the world's problems. (CSB)

1:20 God made foolish the wisdom of the world. All humanly devised philosophical systems end in meaninglessness because they have a wrong concept of God and his revelation. (CSB)

1:21 foolishness of what was preached. Not that preaching is foolish, but that the message being preached (Christ crucified) is viewed by the world as foolish. (CSB)

1:23 stumbling block to Jews. † They expected a triumphant, political Messiah (Ac 1:6), not a crucified one. Also, the teaching that deity became incarnate and died was repugnant to them. (CSB)

1:25 foolishness of God. God's ways appear foolish to those who do not understand them. (TLSB)

1:30 because of him ... you are in Christ. It is God who has called you to union and communion with Christ. (CSB)

GOSPEL – John 2:13-22

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” ¹⁸ Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” ²⁰ The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. ²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

2:14 temple. The temple included the Court of the Gentiles, the only place where non-Jew converts could pray. A market there enabled Jews to purchase sacrificial animals when they arrived, rather than bring them from afar. They changed foreign money into the sacred half-shekel required for the temple tax (Ex 30:13). These vendors provided services that made worship more convenient or “user-friendly” in fulfillment of the law. It is estimated that the tax and lambs brought in annual profits in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the temple treasury had over \$10 million when the Roman Crassus raided it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

2:14 cattle, sheep and doves. This was for the sacrifices prescribed by the Levitical code, performed Passover. In the outer court of the Gentiles, merchants sold animals to the travelers because it was impractical for travelers to transport animals. Luther dubbed this “crass commercialism” (AE 22:220). (TLSB)

2:14 exchanging money. Travelers had to have their money exchanged into the local currency for the temple tax, which required Jewish coins (shekels) without human images. The on-site bankers charged an exorbitant exchange fee. (TLSB)

2:15 whip . Made of ropes used for animals in the temple. Symbol of Jesus’ moral authority. (TLSB)

2:17 zeal. Christ was consumed—literally, “eaten up”—with such zeal that brought him from heaven and took him to the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

2:20 No one understood Jesus’ sermon at the time. Only after the resurrection did they truly believe, i.e., find comfort in Jesus’ Gospel promise and perceive its relation to Ps 69:9 and the earthly temple he fulfilled. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)