

**United Proclamation of the Gospel
&
St. John's Windish Lutheran Church
Scripture and Prayers during Coronavirus Pandemic**

**Readings, Reflections, Prayers shared by Luther Seminary
Awesome Mystery
Lenten Devotional 2021**

Monday March 1, 2021

Exodus 20:1-17

Then God gave the people all these instructions^[a]:

²“I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

³“You must not have any other god but me.

⁴“You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. ⁵You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. ⁶ But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those^[b] who love me and obey my commands.

⁷“You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

⁸“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

¹²“Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³“You must not murder.

¹⁴“You must not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You must not steal.

¹⁶“You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

¹⁷“You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

Reflection: What guarantees our safety, health, and flourishing, even amidst diseases, disasters, and interpersonal or societal conflicts? The Ten Commandments, which Jesus concisely summarized with two great commands: Love the Lord your God with the totality of your being, and love your neighbor as you love yourself.

These commands create the conditions for trustworthy relationships; they make clear that genuine love never compromises truth or justice. They free us to rebuff all false gods incapable of generating life within and among us—including the gods of wealth, fame, and power, and any human or creaturely that that we allow to consume our energy and suck up our attention. Moreover, by rejecting any action that would violate the sacrosanct dignity of human beings, they keep us from turning others into a means for our ends, just as they call us to resist anyone who would turn us into a means for their ends.

Prayer:

O God, help us recognize the false gods in our lives so that we can respect and care for others with the same love that enables us to respect and care for ourselves. Amen.

Additional prayers: Calm to children who are fearful from all they hear and see around them
 Patience in times of school closures
 Guidance for school administrators as they make decisions
 Parents as they contemplate how to safely educate children

Tuesday March 2, 2021

Psalm 19

¹ The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
 The skies display his craftsmanship.
² Day after day they continue to speak;
 night after night they make him known.
³ They speak without a sound or word;
 their voice is never heard.^[a]
⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
 and their words to all the world.
God has made a home in the heavens for the sun.
⁵ It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding.
 It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race.
⁶ The sun rises at one end of the heavens
 and follows its course to the other end.
 Nothing can hide from its heat.
⁷ The instructions of the LORD are perfect,
 reviving the soul.
The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
 making wise the simple.
⁸ The commandments of the LORD are right,
 bringing joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are clear,
 giving insight for living.
⁹ Reverence for the LORD is pure,
 lasting forever.
The laws of the LORD are true;
 each one is fair.
¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold,
 even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey,
 even honey dripping from the comb.
¹¹ They are a warning to your servant,
 a great reward for those who obey them.
¹² How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
 Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
¹³ Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
 Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
 and innocent of great sin.

¹⁴ May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Reflection:

God's wisdom surrounds us—from the skies above to the earth beneath our feet. As day and night turn into each other, the very passing of time conveys truth without words or voice. Nothing can hide from the shining and heat of the sun. Resonating with this wisdom in creation, God's law and commandments explicitly teach us how to dwell in the sanity God would have for us. Enlightening us, they call us to return to our true selves. Sweeter than honey and more to be desired than gold, they transform our childish reactions into judicious responses. Their wholesome lucidity grounds our ephemeral lives in what remains for eternity.

As we meditate on God's wisdom in creation and law, we find ourselves grounded in truth. We can acknowledge the shame we would rather hide. And we can stand up to those who would dominate us and keep us from clarity.

Prayer:

Permeate our lives with your wisdom, O God. Ground us in the clarity of your truth and just ways. Amen.

Some Additional prayers during this time:

Workers who are anxious about the safety of their workplaces
Uncertainty in how work will be accomplished in the days ahead
Calm and guidance amid financial uncertainties

Wednesday March 3, 2021

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

¹⁸ The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. ¹⁹ As the Scriptures say,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise
and discard the intelligence of the intelligent."^[e]

²⁰ So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. ²¹ Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. ²² It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. ²³ So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

²⁴ But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles,^[f] Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Reflection:

In many of our interpersonal and societal conflicts, our need to be right often masks what is actually at work: a need to protect our egos and the interests of the groups that secure them. Regardless of whether we see ourselves as ethically or theologically "correct"—the fact remains. We habitually use the best that secular and religious

wisdom has to offer to get what we want. Moreover, we intentionally remain oblivious to the ways our entrenched patterns of perceiving and responding to life keep us from truly understanding the people around us and using what we have to respond to their needs.

Amidst all this, the message of a crucified Messiah upends our carefully constructed worlds. Neither irrational nor impotent, the “word of the cross” reminds us that there may be truer ways of perceiving our circumstances and more just ways of using our agency for the welfare of others

Prayer:

O God, transform our wisdom and power with the truth and righteousness of your Child Jesus, the crucified Messiah. Amen.

Some additional prayers during this time:

Government institutions and municipal agencies:

Prayers for Times of Public Health Concern: COVID-19/Coronavirus

Guidance when making decisions for our communities

Thursday March 4, 2021

John 2:13-22

¹³ It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵ Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. ¹⁶ Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, “Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!”

¹⁷ Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: “Passion for God’s house will consume me.”^[a]

¹⁸ But the Jewish leaders demanded, “What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it.”

¹⁹ “All right,” Jesus replied. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

²⁰ “What!” they exclaimed. “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?” ²¹ But when Jesus said “this temple,” he meant his own body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Reflection:

Jesus is angry. His father’s house has become a marketplace. This scene in an ancient temple is not unlike one he might also find in our day, where we turn almost every aspect of our lives into a commodity for exchange.

We carefully market our spiritual and religious identities. We turn our deepest convictions into brands we buy and sell. We develop innovative

strategies for undercutting our competition and increasing our market share in an increasingly cutthroat religious and spiritual marketplace. We compare ourselves based on the amount we can charge for our services.

Amid all this, Jesus' zealous rage indicts us. It reminds us that his body is our only temple, a body crucified by religious and political powers, and the economies of exchange that sustained them. Wherever sin, pain, and death haunt us, and the promise of resurrection brings new life—that is where God dwells among us.

Prayer:

O God, give us eyes to see that—even amid the insidious ways we commodify ourselves—you still dwell among us in the Messiah's crucified body, creating life and righteousness wherever death and injustice are at work. Amen.

Some additional prayers during this time:

Hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Friday March 5, 2021

John 2:13-22

¹³ It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵ Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. ¹⁶ Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

¹⁷ Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me."^[c]

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²⁰ "What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?" ²¹ But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Reflection:

Jesus' zeal for his father's house rings through the centuries. In a world increasingly subject to a global market, we are often oblivious to the ways we commodify ourselves and others—even the things of God—in order to secure some advantage. Echoing the prophets and psalmists, Jesus' speech and actions in this story remind us that he is the Passover that liberates us from the demonic grip of our dehumanizing ways of perceiving and responding to other people. Indeed, Jesus' body enacts a very different kind of exchange—one that stands in sharp contrast to the ways we turn others and ourselves into commodities measured by our value on a market.

In this alternative exchange, we become signs of God's temple—the Messiah's body for one another and the rest of the world—precisely when our overflow of resources provides for another's need, even as their overflow provides for our need.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, we are grateful that through your crucified body, you transform our commodifying exchanges into generative relationships that deepen our connection with you and with one another. Amen.

Some additional prayers during this time:

Houses of worship and their ministries at this time

For all who travel

For all who grieve the loss of loved ones

Saturday March 6, 2021

“Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery” (ELW 334, Verses 1-3)

1. Tree of Life and awesome myst'ry, In your death we are reborn
 Though you die in all of hist'ry,
 Still you rise with ev'ry morn,
 Still you rise with ev'ry morn.
2. We remember truth once spoken, love passed on through act and word;
 ev'ry person lost and broken
 wears the body of our Lord,
 wears the body of our Lord.
3. Christ, you lead and we shall follow, Stumbling though our steps may be;
 One with you in joy and sorrow,
 We the river, you the sea,
 We the river, you the sea.

Reflection:

Biblical traditions use the image of the Tree of Life to depict God's Wisdom, evident in all creation and revealed in the Torah (God's law). Early followers of Jesus drew on these connections to affirm that Jesus was indeed not only the Messiah but also the Word and Wisdom of God, who was with God at the dawn of creation.

This Jesus continues to be our Tree of Life, in whose death we are reborn to new life. As we remember the truth and love he embodied, and pass it on through act and word, we wear his body, crucified and raised from the dead, for every lost and broken person. Although we frequently stumble, his is the lead we follow. As our Tree of Life, his truth and love permeate every aspect of our everyday lives, whether we are in joy or in sorrow, as the sea overflows into rivers.

Prayer:

O God, permeate every aspect of our daily lives with the truth and love embodied in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Some additional prayers

The World Health Organization

Medical researchers and scientists

All the animals that are used in medical research to benefit our lives

Sunday March 7, 2020**“Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery” (ELW 334, Verse 3)**

Christ, you lead and we shall follow, Stumbling though our steps may be;
One with you in joy and sorrow,
We the river, you the sea,
We the river, you the sea.

Reflection:

How do we follow the Messiah’s lead? By daily claiming the promises made in our baptism. This means daily dying to our false selves and reclaiming our birth into the Messiah’s life. It means continually having our distorted and dysfunctional ways of perceiving and responding to circumstances rewired and transformed.

We are no longer powerless in the face of forces that seem to be beyond our control—whether they be diseases, disasters, or interpersonal and societal conflicts. We are no longer commodities, whose identities are for sale in an insidious global market that tracks our every move. Jesus, the crucified Messiah and Wisdom of God, has liberated us from all that would hold us back from fully becoming who we are as those created in God’s image. Though we may stumble, the Messiah is one with us in joy and in sorrow, overflowing into our lives as the sea overflows into rivers.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, be with us in our joys and sorrows as you daily overflow into our lives as rivers flow into the sea. Amen.