

Lent III 2021

Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 2:13-22, Psalm 19

Whenever I drive or walk by a church, I like to try and guess what denomination it is, forgive me but it's an occupational hazard, being a priest. Red doors, it's usually Episcopalian. Stained glass windows are a big clue. Our low-church Protestant brothers and sisters worry about breaking the Commandment about graven images so that they only have geometric designs in the windows, while many Episcopal, Catholic or Orthodox churches have windows memorializing the saints and people we want to emulate or copy.

Likewise, as the joke goes, if you go into a Baptist or Presbyterian Sacristy, there'll be a Big Cross. If you go into a Roman Catholic Sacristy, there'll be a big Crucifix. And if you go into an Episcopalian Sacristy, you'll find a big Mirror!

For all our differences, we also have many things in common. God, Christ, the Bible, the Sacraments, so much in common, yet we can get somewhat obsessed by the 5% of differences we have and history has shown those minor differences have often led to bloodshed.

Our last reading this morning is about one of the great pillars of all our denominations. The 10 Commandments. The Protestants can usually recite them all, chapter and verse. The Anglicans usually can only name a few of them until reminded. We're particularly grateful that Jesus summarized them down to two for us: Love God and Love your neighbor as yourself.

What Rabbi Jesus did for us is to take the First Commandment, "You shall have no other God than me". And the last one "You shall not Covet." "Don't covet your neighbor's house or spouse or SUV, or 401k or anything that belongs to your neighbor"

Wanting those things is OK, we all have ambition and dreams and hopes. The problem is wanting those things at your neighbor's expense. It almost always leads to violence, stealing or bad jealousy.

All the Middle Commandments about murder, adultery, and stealing are just about the social and religious repercussions of now obeying numbers 1 +10. I say "bad jealousy" because I believe there's also a good kind of jealousy like the Commandment we'll hear in a few minutes when God says 'I am your God and I'm jealous God (we'll ignore the threat to punish children for the sins of the parents because I sincerely hope we misunderstood God's devoted passion for us like someone madly in love with us).

St. Paul is going to tell us that's God's wisdom is way different from the World's wisdom. Paul will even tell us that God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom.

Wisdom is a part obsession of mine. There are few things I covet more, but I'm not even sure I have any understanding of what wisdom really is. It's one of those words, we use so easily and frequently, but the more you think about it, the less you understand it. The only thing I can say I

know about wisdom is never to believe someone who says they understand wisdom. The person who says "I'm wise" is assuredly not wise.

And then we're doing to come to the Gospel. We're going to see the one-time Jesus loses his temper things got a bit tense last Sunday when he called his best friend "Satan", but this week's is he angriest we've ever seen Jesus get.

He walked into his Father's house, the Temple of Jerusalem, like walking into the Vatican and he found money changers and vendors selling animals for the sacrifices and he totally got furious. We'll even hear how he made a whip and starts throwing tables over. "Stop making my house a marketplace!"

And then the religious people then tick him off even more. Religious people and clergy seemed to get under his skin much more than non-religious people. We have to ask ourselves why.

Think of all the Religious people who fight to make sure the 10 Commandments are displayed at courthouses or the religious people who very aggressively fight to have a Christmas Creche or Christmas carols sung in public schools.

Why would Jesus get so passionately irate at that? Don't we need more Religion in our World? I think he'd say we don't need more rules and more religion. I firmly believe he's going to say we need more Love than Religion. Religion often leads to violence. Love of God, Love of Neighbor, Love of self, those are the things he wants us to covet. He wants us serve each other rather than covet each other.

The clergy of his day were more worried about the temple building than the temple of his body, In fact, this episode we're about to hear where he talks about "destroy this temple, and I'll raise it up in 3 days" was about him not the building, yet that'll mistakenly be used as evidence against him at his trial and execution.

But the clergy couldn't see that, just like the Christians who get violent about some view they believe they're getting from the Bible are totally missing the spirit of what God is trying to tell us, over and over again throughout the Bible, namely Love God with all your heart, mind and Soul and love your neighbor as yourself just as you are.

This is the wisdom of God which makes our perceived religious wisdom foolish. "For God's foolishness is wiser than ours and God's weakness is stronger than our human strength.

Let us now listen to what the spirit is saying to God's people.