

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Third Sunday in Lent, March 7, 2021

Making Room

John 2:13-22

2:13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2:14 In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

2:15 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.

2:16 He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

2:18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

2:20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

2:21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

2:22 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.

This is not the easiest passage! Many people are not quite comfortable with this Jesus portrayed; but, some version of this account appears in every gospel.

I do wonder what was going through Jesus' mind as he saw the temple that day. He had been there before—he had even gotten in trouble with his parents for hanging out too long there. What was it about the temple that day? From all accounts, it seems like everything that was happening at the temple had happened just like that before. Worshippers were coming to make their sacrifices. Vendors were there at the ready to sell them their requisite sacrifices. Money changers

were there to assist with the currency exchange. The Gospel of John does not say this; but, I do wonder, “What do you do when you look up and realize that there is no room?”

The Gospel of John does not say that anybody was doing anything out of the ordinary or anything immoral—a system was in place—worshippers came to sacrifice; they bought their sacrifice once they got there; and, they bought it with the temple currency. The vendors and money changers were there to provide the needed services. Perhaps Jesus saw that the system was broken: business had crowded out worship, some folk’s sacrifices were valued more than others, some worshippers mattered more than others, some were pushed out, pushed to the margins; there simply was no more room!

Jesus is acquainted with being on the wrong side of “no vacancy” signs. His parents told him about his birth in Bethlehem. Jesus flips out—flips tables and drives out the vendors to make room. I do not necessarily recommend this course of action to quite this degree in every situation; but, what do we or should we do when we realize that in **God’s house** and in **God’s world**, sometimes systems are in place and grinding along, leaving little to no room for some—leaving little to **no room for God** or **the move of God’s spirit**? What does your righteous anger look like?

One commentary on this text reminded me of an article by the African American writer, James Baldwin, entitled “As Much Truth as One Can Bear.” In it, Baldwin says that the vocation of the writer is to be an instrument of change, writing, “Not everything that can be faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” “Societies are never able to examine, to overhaul themselves: this effort must be made by that yeast which every society cunningly and unfailingly secretes. This ferment, this disturbance is the responsibility, and the necessity of writers.” I would add—this is the responsibility of true disciples of God.

John would argue that all of this was less about that temple in Jerusalem and more about Jesus’ body as temple. Even still, Jesus with his body made room—for the loss, the left out, the least—On the cross, he made room. In his rising, he made room. Let’s make room—sacred space where callings can emerge. Let’s make room—affirming space where folks can see that they are fearfully and wonderfully made no matter what the world may say. Let’s make room—discernment space—so all can hear the good news for their lives. Let’s make room—disturb the ineffective, the unjust, the exclusionary to make room for God to dwell in us and among us. Let’s make room!

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, where in your own faith life does room need to be made? For whom or for what? Where in the church does room need to be made? For whom or for what?

PRAY:

Jesus, cleanser of temples and souls, at this point in the Lenten journey, look deep within our hearts and our lives, and clear away all that holds us back. May our minds, spirits, and bodies be a temple that is open to your presence: and may our words and our actions be transparent to your love and truth. We pray that the church will be purified in its life and mission, so that all that we do may reveal your gospel to others. We rejoice in knowing that there is room in our lives for you to dwell with us. In your name we pray, AMEN

adapted from a prayer by Ann Siddall

This week is the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS (USA) March 7-14, 2021
For more information: <https://www.balmingilead.org/nwpha/>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, how will you make room in your faith life? How will you work to make room in the church? Will it require drastic measures? If yes, what might some of those measures be? In this Lenten Season, do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. 2021 Liberation and Unity Lenten Devotional: <https://www.amazon.com/LIBERATION-UNITY-Lenten-Devotional-Meditation-ebook/dp/B08TGHQ3TX/ref=sr/1/1?crid=2PZK8J6YGY2LB&dchild=1&keywords=2021+lenten+devotional+liberation+and+unity&qid=1612922064&srefix=2021+liberation+and+unity,aps,159&sr=8-1>

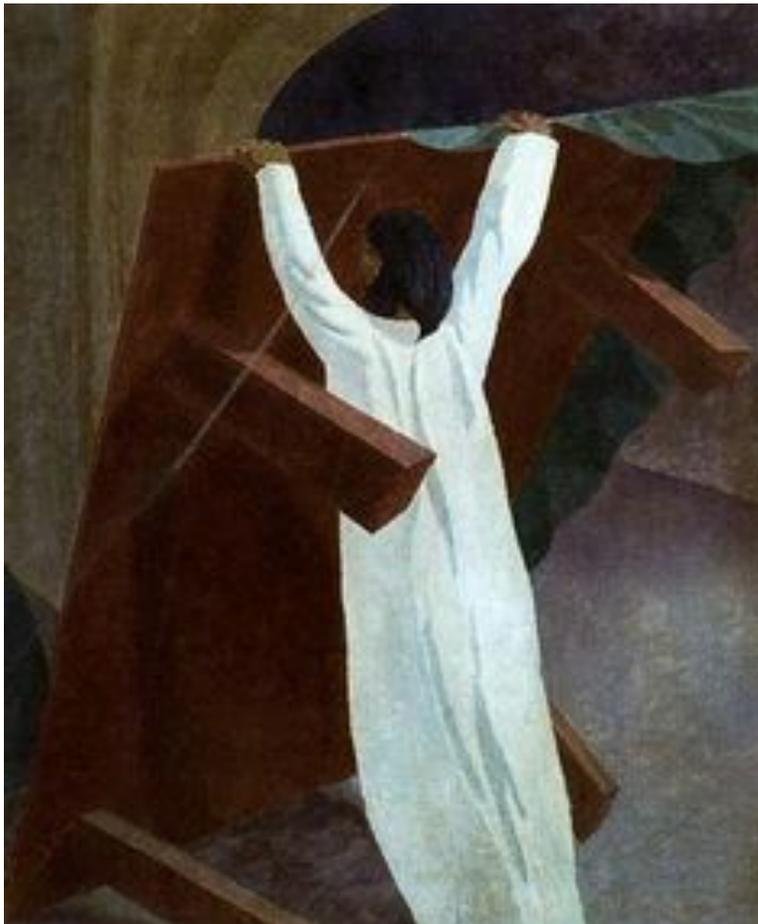
Song:

I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord
AMEC Hymnal, #517

1. I love Thy king-dom, Lord,
The house of Thine a-bode,
The Church our blest Re-deem-er saved
With His own pre-cious blood.
2. I love Thy Church, O God!
Her walls be-fore Thee stand
Dear as the ap-ple of Thine eye,
And gra-ven on Thy hand.
3. For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers as-cend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.
4. Be-yond my high-est joy
I prize her heaven-ly ways,
Her sweet com-mu-nion, sol-emn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.
5. Sure as Thy truth shall last,
To Zi-on shall be given
The bright-est glo-ries earth can yield,
And bright-er bliss of heaven. A-men.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.