

# Celebrate

Third Sunday in Lent

March 3, 2024

*The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The commandments begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and profit-making can become our gods. The Ten Commandments are essential to our baptismal call: centered first in God's liberating love, we strive to live out justice and mercy in our communities and the world.*

## Prayer of the Day

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Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

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Exodus 20:1-17

*After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.*

God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup>you shall have no other gods before me.

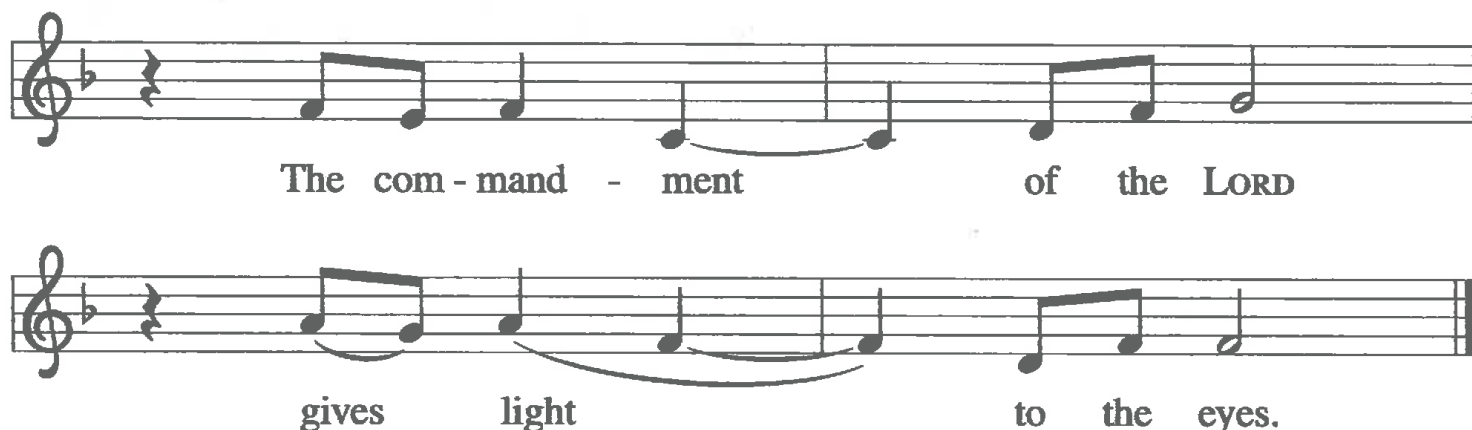
<sup>4</sup>You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

*continued*



The heavens declare the glo-<sup>1</sup> ry of God,  
 and the sky proclaims its<sup>1</sup> maker's handiwork.  
<sup>2</sup>One day tells its tale<sup>1</sup> to another,  
 and one night imparts knowledge<sup>1</sup> to another.  
<sup>3</sup>Although they have no<sup>1</sup> words or language,  
 and their voices<sup>1</sup> are not heard,  
<sup>4</sup>their sound has gone out into all lands,  
 and their message to the ends<sup>1</sup> of the world,  
 where God has pitched a tent<sup>1</sup> for the sun.  
<sup>5</sup>It comes forth like a bridegroom out<sup>1</sup> of his chamber;  
 it rejoices like a champion to<sup>1</sup> run its course.  
<sup>6</sup>It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens  
 and runs about to the end of<sup>1</sup> it again;  
 nothing is hidden from its<sup>1</sup> burning heat. **R**  
<sup>7</sup>The teaching of the LORD is perfect and re-<sup>1</sup> lives the soul;  
 the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom<sup>1</sup> to the simple.  
<sup>8</sup>The statutes of the LORD are just and re-<sup>1</sup> joice the heart;  
 the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light<sup>1</sup> to the eyes.  
<sup>9</sup>The fear of the LORD is clean and en-<sup>1</sup> dures forever;  
 the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous<sup>1</sup> altogether.  
<sup>10</sup>More to be desired are they than gold, more than<sup>1</sup> much fine gold,  
 sweeter far than honey, than honey<sup>1</sup> in the comb. **R**  
<sup>11</sup>By them also is your ser-<sup>1</sup> vant enlightened,  
 and in keeping them there is<sup>1</sup> great reward.  
<sup>12</sup>Who can detect one's<sup>1</sup> own offenses?  
 Cleanse me from my<sup>1</sup> secret faults.  
<sup>13</sup>Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;  
 let them not get dominion<sup>1</sup> over me;  
 then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a<sup>1</sup> great offense.  
<sup>14</sup>Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
 be acceptable<sup>1</sup> in your sight,  
 O LORD, my strength and<sup>1</sup> my redeemer. **R**

First Reading, continued

<sup>13</sup>You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>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.

## Second Reading

## 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

*The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.*

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know

God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

## Gospel

## John 2:13-22

*Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.*

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal

for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>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.

# Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Trusting in God’s promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

A brief silence.

You alone are God. We thank you for the gift of sabbath rest. Awaken the church to the mystery of your presence and give us glad hearts as we receive the good news of your deliverance. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

You renew creation. Drive out those who would make the earth a marketplace. Protect rainforests, mountaintops, oceans, and wilderness areas from commercial exploitation. Unite nations, policymakers, and businesses in efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

You judge the nations. We pray for an end to war and strife in every land (*regions in conflict may be named*). Strengthen international efforts to negotiate peace and provide humanitar-

ian aid to people fleeing from conflict. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

You bring healing and hope. We give thanks for physicians, nurses, researchers, therapists, and public health workers who prevent and treat illness. We pray for any who are sick (*especially*). Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

You abide with your people. Sustain any in this community undergoing life transitions: marriage, divorce, childbirth, adoption, moving, graduation, employment change, or a death in the family (*especially*). We pray for those preparing for baptism. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You bring life from death. We remember our loved ones who have died, confident that they have new life in you. May we trust that nothing can separate us from your love. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.  
**Amen.**

# Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 84. **Tuesday** Hebrews 9:23-28. **Wednesday** Mark 11:15-19. **Thursday** (commemoration of Perpetua and Felicity and companions, martyrs at Carthage, 202) Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22. **Friday** Ephesians 1:7-14. **Saturday** Numbers 20:22-29. **Fourth Sunday in Lent** (commemoration of Harriet Tubman, 1913; Sojourner Truth, 1883; renewers of society) Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21.

CELEBRATE March 3, 2024

Volume 55, Number 2

CELEBRATE (ISSN 1083-3242, USPS 763-460) is published quarterly by Augsburg Fortress, 411 Washington Avenue North, Third Floor, Minneapolis, MN, 55401. Periodicals postage paid in St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Celebrate, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, P.O. Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-8730. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part \$5.79 per 100 copies; price in Canada subject to exchange rates. Minimum order 50 copies of each issue; all orders must be in multiples of 50. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by Lorraine Brugh. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship, Year B* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008). Please visit our website at [augsburgfortress.org](http://augsburgfortress.org). Lectionary year B.  
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