



## *Week Three of Lent*

### **The Temple**

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# *Preparing Our Hearts*

## **Greeting**

Here we are, what a week it's been.

We've been riding an emotional roller coaster between thinking that this is all overblown to feeling afraid at our worst moments.

Many of us had plans we've had to cancel or have been canceled for us. Some of us are anxious either for selves or loved ones who live far away. Some of your retirement plans or 401k's have taken a dive.

The stores are crowded, and you can't find toilet paper or bleach anywhere. Some are feeling the effects of isolation and wondering how you're going to make it another week or month. We just don't

know how long. But here's what we do know.....

we know we have our faith and that we are a community of faith.

We know that our country and this world has seen life turn on a dime before, and we've witnessed and will continue to witness

more and more the way people pull together,

looking out for neighbor and caring for one another in crisis.

As we begin our worship, in this mostly empty space,

I want to say that you are missed here but we all carry you here, in our mind's eye and inner hearts as we prepare our hearts and our minds to worship the God who sees us through every challenge, every crisis, every hill and every valley.

And as we do, we're reminded that God  
is not just with us as in next to us, but with us as inside of us....

This song was introduced to me by Dan Nichols, a resident artist for  
congregation Rodef Shalom. I want to thank that congregation for  
welcoming me all these years and continuing to be a main source of  
inspiration here in my own worship of God.

### **Prelude**

*God's in Me*

## *Entering the Story*

We continue on our journey through Lent as we step inside the story  
of Jesus in the temple. We put ourselves in the picture so that we  
might take a closer look and let the ancient story open us to deeper  
conviction for our role as disciples of Jesus.

Enter.....

Enter the story

Enter the place you belong

Not just looking on

For this is *your* story

Enter the story

Jesus enters a crowded busy temple, very different from the temple or sanctuary I see in front of me. But if our bodies are our temples, and if together we are the body of Christ, then let's pause for a minute, to think back on the week, to ask how we might have trusted more and feared a little less. And let us make our confessions silently in our hearts as we are assured that God loves us, forgives us and trusts us to make the kinds of changes we can only make through God.

### **Silence is Kept**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Know this: you can open your eyes and see with your heart, at any moment, no matter how hesitant you have been.

**We are forgiven and freed,  
encouraged and loved  
by a God who wants us to live fully.  
Thanks be to God. Amen**

# *Gaining Perspective*

## **Time for the Child in All of Us**

*When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."*

## **Listening for the Story in Word**

*Scriptures*

### **Psalm 69: 8-16**

I have become a stranger to my kindred,  
an alien to my mother's children.

**9**

It is zeal for your house that has consumed me;  
the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

**10**

When I humbled my soul with fasting,  
they insulted me for doing so.

**11**

When I made sackcloth my clothing,  
I became a byword to them.

**12**

I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate,  
and the drunkards make songs about me.

**13**

But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.

At an acceptable time, O God,  
in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.

With your faithful help **14** rescue me  
from sinking in the mire;

let me be delivered from my enemies  
and from the deep waters.

**15**

Do not let the flood sweep over me,  
or the deep swallow me up,  
or the Pit close its mouth over me.

**16**

Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;  
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

### **John 2:13-21**

**13** The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. **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. **16** He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” **17** His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” **18** The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” **19** Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” **20** The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” **21** But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

One: The Word of God for the People of God

**All: Thanks be to GOD!**

## **Sermon**

### *Temple Body*

You just heard a story about Jesus in a packed Temple, his house of worship, and here I am standing in an empty one. I’ve never been more aware of the importance of your bodies, your faces, and your eyes, even the eyes of those who have them closed as they take their morning naps.

I've never gotten upset about that by the way. When I see you dozing off, my first and only thought is...they're comfortable here, in this space, with these people and with me, comfortable in this sanctuary, which brings peace. I think God smiles over us when we're at home in our houses of worship. And for the next few weeks my prayer is that you can find that peace in your home, as we connect in every other way possible.

But there's another kind of comfort, that Jesus was witnessing the day he entered the temple in our scripture this morning, the kind that leads to complacency, the kind of comfort that leads to a lack of perspective, and an inability to see what's truly important. I don't think any of us today, after the last few weeks are having any trouble grasping what's most important, which is life itself.

And it's during this time, and the weeks maybe months ahead, that this house of worship and the community that built it, will need one another, and will have an opportunity to model for the world around us that we're willing to step into faith in ways that may even seem odd to our neighbors, which was the experience of the psalmist you heard.

Jesus quotes the psalmist who's lamenting to God that no one understands his love for God's house. His neighbors are throwing insults at him, accusing him of stupidity for finding meaning in faith.

And for the psalmist in vs 20 it's breaking his heart, leading him to place of despair. Psalm 69 is reminder of what it means to suffer for your faith.

Even today we sometimes experience others who look at us like we have two heads for claiming that a worship service is one of the more valuable experiences of our weekly life. It takes faith to believe that what we do in worship on a Sunday morning essentially matters. If we take our faith seriously, we understand God's presence with us here, between us and even across screens, from here to you at home. And that becomes an essential gathering, which is why we're together now, virtually rather than isolating completely.

This week more than ever we're aware of how very sacred and special this space is, as it sits empty. This week more than ever we're aware of what's most important, our lives and ability to be together, and all of a sudden, the things that mattered just a few weeks ago, like the leaky roof, the name tag system, the dwindling donut fund, the floor that needs replacing, none of that seems to matter now. And that's right.

Our spiritual vision should be opened up in times like these. Jesus knew that as he journeyed to the cross and we know it as this pandemic reprioritizes what's most important, life itself. I wish I could say that I'm witnessing people in the stores coming together as they did after 911, but my experience has been that people are hurried and

anxious and looking out for themselves. And like Jesus in this morning's scripture, I have wanted to yell in the middle of Trader Joe's, "Can we please remember what's at stake and maybe hand one of your five packages of toilet paper to someone who has none?" We have an opportunity now, as a faith community, to model what we hope for the world to be: to practice what it means to love our neighbors, to look out for one another, for the younger to shop for the older and leave the groceries at the door; to continue to call one another, check in.

Or in the words of Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky.

*Every hand that we don't shake must  
become a phone call that we place.*

*Every embrace that we avoid must  
become a verbal expression of warmth and concern.*

*Every inch and every foot that we  
physically place between ourselves and another,  
must become a thought as to how we might be  
of help to that other, should the need arise.*

John tells us that...Jesus names his own body as the temple now. And his foreshadowing of rebuilding it in three days, alludes to his own death and resurrection.

And with his resurrection, with our ability to come to God through Christ, we become that body now. And the temple that is Christ's body lives in each one of us now. So when we breathe deeply these next few weeks or months, and I really encourage you to do so, may you be reminded that breath is life. That our bodies which breathe and are made up of water, hold the spirit of God within us.

And with every breath, may you be reminded that your God is with you. That you are never truly alone. We are all connected through the living Christ and the holy spirit which sustains us through all the most difficult times. Even and most especially the times that scare us the most. I won't deny it's been a frightening week to imagine worst case scenarios. And I myself have gone back and forth from feeling afraid to trusting that we will get through this. I won't tell you to never feel afraid, fear is part of our human condition, but I can remind you that acknowledging it is very different from living in a place of fear, allowing it to control your wellbeing or making choices out of fear.

In the words of John O'Donohue:

*Close your eyes.  
Gather all the kindling  
About your heart  
To create one spark  
That is all you need  
To nourish the flame*

*That will cleanse the dark  
Of its weight of festered fear.  
A new confidence will come alive  
To urge you towards higher ground  
Where your imagination  
will learn to engage difficulty  
As its most rewarding threshold!*

Practice the trust, that is our faith... In this life and beyond, always and without exception, God is with you. Talk with God, talk with Jesus, talk to your kids, your relatives, your friends, your pets. If you have Skype, use it. If you have an iPhone, use Facetime. Connect.

Limit your news time, breathe in the air in your backyard, reach out to those who are most isolated, and let the zeal, that is the energy in your heart for God, run through your body, which is its own temple, its own sanctuary, With Christ at the center of your internal house of worship, the love of God flowing through like the breeze from your window, and the sustaining power of the spirit coming down like the much needed, life giving rain, may you find moments of peace, in your home both, the structure, and your temple body.

Amen.

## **Listening for the Story in Song**

*Still My Soul be still*

## *Responding*

### **Prayers of the People**

Dan White has his surgery on Tuesday

Family members and friends in Seattle

The Antieri's, who are home now

Our health care providers

Those who have lost their lives, those who are currently ill,

those who are vulnerable

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Offertory**

*Sanctuary*

# *Entering the World's Story*

## **Closing Hymn**

### *Tell Me the Stories of Jesus*

Tell me the stories of Jesus  
I love to hear;  
Things I would ask Him to tell me  
If He were here:  
Scenes by the wayside,  
Tales of the sea,  
Stories of Jesus,  
Tell them to me.

First let me hear how the children  
Stood 'round His knee,  
And I shall fancy His blessing Resting on me;  
Words full of kindness,  
Deeds full of grace,  
All in the love light  
Of Jesus' face.

Into the city I'd follow,  
There take my stand,  
Waving a branch of the palm tree  
High in my hand;  
One of His heralds,  
Yes, I would sing  
Loudest hosannas,  
"Jesus is King!"

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## **Benediction**