

"THE MOUNT OF LOYALTY"

JOHN 2:13-22

THIRD S. IN LENT

MESSIAH, BOERNE

MARCH 3, 2024

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

READ TEXT: JN 2:13-22

LET US PRAY:

DEAR LORD, FORGIVE US FOR OUR REBELLION AGAINST YOU AND OUR DISOBEDIENCE TO YOUR WILL DUE TO THE WEAKNESS OF OUR SINFUL NATURE, THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE WORLD, AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE DEVIL. STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH IN YOU THROUGH YOUR WORD AND SACRAMENTS, AND HELP US BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE FAITHFUL TO YOU IN ALL OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS AND DEEDS, FOR YOU—FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT—ARE OUR GOD AND REFUGE, IN WHOM WE TRUST, AND TO YOU WE PLEDGE OUR LOYALTY; IN JESUS' NAME. AMEN.

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

LOYALTY MEANS BEING FAITHFUL TO ONES RESPONSIBILITIES, DUTIES, OR PROMISES TO OTHERS. PEOPLE EXPRESS LOYALTY IN VARYING DEGREES TOWARD MANY DIFFERENT THINGS. FOR EXAMPLE, SPORTS FANS REMAIN LOYAL TO THEIR FAVORITE TEAMS, WHETHER THEY WIN OR LOOSE; FRIENDS SPEAK UP AND DEFEND EACH OTHER AGAINST THEIR DETRACTORS; AND HUSBANDS AND WIVES REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THEIR WEDDING VOWS TO LOVE AND CHERISH EACH OTHER UNTIL DEATH PARTS THEM. ALL THESE PEOPLE ARE CLIMBING THE MOUNT OF LOYALTY. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE MANY OTHERS WHO DO NOT REMAIN LOYAL; THEIR PERSEVERANCE AND

DETERMINATION FADE WHEN THEY ENCOUNTER TRIALS OR
ADVERSITIES IN LIFE.

IN OUR TEXT THIS MORNING JESUS DEMONSTRATED GREAT
LOYALTY TO THE FATHER AND TO HIS MISSION FOR US AND OUR
SALVATION. HE REMAINED LOYAL TO THE FATHER (1) BY
FULFILLING THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW, (2) BY EXPRESSING
RIGHTEOUS ANGER ON BEHALF OF THE LOWLY, AND (3) BY
RESTORING THE TEMPLE—BOTH HIS AND OURS. HIS LOYALTY
BROUGHT ABOUT OUR SALVATION AND ALSO SERVES AS A MODEL FOR
US TO FOLLOW BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AS WE
CONSIDER THE GOSPEL LESSON TODAY, WE PRAY THAT THE HOLY
SPIRIT WILL INSTILL IN US THE SAME ATTITUDE OF LOYALTY
TOWARD GOD THAT JESUS HAD TOWARD HIS FATHER, SO THAT WE,
TOO, MAY FAITHFULLY MASTER THE MOUNT OF LOYALTY.

FIRST, AS GOD'S UNIQUE SON, JESUS LOYALLY FOLLOWED
GOD'S LAW AND SUBMITTED HIMSELF TO IT. HE KEPT THE MOSAIC
LAW COMPLETELY. HE ATTENDED SYNAGOG EVERY SABBATH, AS ALL
LOYAL MEMBERS OF GOD'S COVENANT COMMUNITY DID. HE MADE
FREQUENT TRIPS TO JERUSALEM AS WAS REQUIRED OF ALL LOYAL
ISRAELITES WHO WORSHIPPED THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND
JACOB. IN THESE AND MANY OTHER WAYS JESUS EXPRESSED
LOYALTY TO HIS FATHER.

IN OUR TEXT WE READ: "WHEN IT WAS ALMOST TIME FOR THE JEWISH PASSOVER, JESUS WENT UP TO JERUSALEM" (V 13). ALL MALE ISRAELITES WERE EXPECTED TO BE PRESENT IN JERUSALEM AT THE THREE ANNUAL JEWISH FESTIVALS, THE OTHER TWO BEING PENTECOST AND TABERNACLES OR BOOTHS. TO LOYAL WORSHIPPERS, THESE THREE JOURNEYS WERE NOT MERE SIGHT-SEEING TRIPS, BUT HOLY PILGRIMMAGES TO THE VERY DWELLING PLACE OF GOD ON EARTH. AT THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM, THEY APPEARED BEFORE THE LORD AND ENTERED HIS ROYAL PRESENCE.

JESUS' LOYALTY TO HIS MISSION FOR US AND OUR SALVATION FINALLY LED HIM TO THE CROSS, WHERE HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE AS OUR PASSOVER SACRIFICE, THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD. HE SUFFERED GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT SO THAT WE MIGHT BE ACQUITTED. HE ENDURED THE TORMENT OF DEATH TO GIVE US THE JOY OF ETERNAL LIFE. THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, GOD CONSIDERS CHRIST'S LOYALTY TO BE OUR OWN. WE ARE FORGIVEN ALL OUR SINS, INCLUDING OUR SINS OF REBELLION AND DISOBEDIENCE TO HIS LAW, IN JESUS' NAME.

WHEN AUGUSTUS WAS EMPOROR OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, HE WAS APPROACHED BY ONE OF HIS SOLDIERS WHO WAS INVOLVED IN A LAWSUIT. THE SOLDIER ASKED HIM TO APPEAR IN COURT IN HIS BEHALF. THE EMPEROR WAS GOING TO SEND A SUBORDINATE

INSTEAD TO SPEAK FOR THE SOLDIER IN COURT. BUT THE SOLDIER, ROLLING BACK HIS SLEEVE, REVEALED HIS BATTLE SCARS AND SHOUTED, "WHEN YOU WERE IN DANGER, I FOUGHT FOR YOU AND WAS READY TO DIE FOR YOU!" CAESAR AUGUSTUS, RECOGNIZING HIS LOYALTY, CHANGED HIS MIND AND WENT TO COURT HIMSELF TO ENSURE THE SOLDIER WAS ACQUITTED.

JESUS IS THE GOOD SOLDIER WHO WAS LOYAL TO HIS FATHER. HIS SCARS FROM THE CROSS ARE THE PROOF OF HIS LOYALTY. JESUS FOUGHT ALL THE POWERS OF DARKNESS THAT OPPOSE THE FATHER AND THREATEN US AS WELL. HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO DEFEAT OUR SINS OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD. BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S LOYALTY, HE HAS PERSUADED THE FATHER TO ACQUIT YOU AND ME, TO DECLARE US INNOCENT AND FORGIVEN.

SECOND, WHILE JESUS WELCOMES REPENTANT SINNERS, HE ALSO STANDS SOLIDLY OPPOSED TO EVERY FORM OF EVIL AND TAKES ACTION TO DESTROY IT. WHEN PEOPLE CAME FROM AFAR TO THE TEMPLE FOR PASSOVER, THEY GENERALLY COULD NOT BRING THEIR SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS WITH THEM, SO MERCHANTS HAD THEM AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN JERUSALEM. SINCE THE PILGRIMS CAME FROM MANY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND HAD VARIOUS TYPES OF CURRENCY WITH THEM, MONEYCHANGERS WOULD EXCHANGE IT INTO THE ONE TYPE OF COINAGE ACCEPTABLE FOR PURCHASE OF ANIMALS AND TO PAY THE TEMPLE TAX. THE PRIESTLY HIERARCHY ARRANGED

FOR ALL THESE TRANSACTIONS TO TAKE PLACE AND REAPED A SHARE OF THE PROFITS AS WELL. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THE TRANSACTIONS TOOK PLACE IN THE TEMPLE ITSELF, IN THE COURT OF THE GENTILES, A PLACE OF PRAYER FOR THE NON-JEWS.

WHEN JESUS ENTERED AND SAW THE MISUSE AND ABUSE OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE, HE WAS FILLED WITH RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION. IN HIS HOLY ZEAL, JESUS UPSET THE TABLES, SPILLED THE GOODS, AND DROVE OUT THE MERCHANTS AND MONEYCHANGERS WITH A WHIP. HIS RIGHTEOUS ANGER WAS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE FOR GOD, FOR PEOPLE WHO NEEDED TO COME TO THE FATHER, AND FOR WHAT IS RIGHT. JESUS' LOYALTY TO GOD WAS ANYTHING BUT HALF-HEARTED OR WISHY-WASHY.

IN WESTERN SOCIETY, THE TREND IS TOWARD SITUATIONAL ETHICS, SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS, AND MORAL LAXITY AND INDIFFERENCE. OUR SOCIETY SEEMS TO HAVE LOST ITS CAPACITY FOR RIGHTEOUS ANGER AS MORE AND MORE PERVERSE THINKING AND BEHAVIOR IS NOT ONLY TOLERATED BUT ACCEPTED AS NORMAL. RIGHTEOUS ANGER RIGHTLY CONFRONTS THE FORCES THAT DISHONOR GOD, SUBVERT MORALITY, DEGRADE OTHERS, AND CORRUPT PEOPLE. WE MUST RETURN TO GOD'S ABSOLUTE MORALITY AS EXPRESSED IN HIS COMMANDMENTS. AT TIMES WE NEED TO BRANDISH THE WHIP OF INDIGNATION AND PROTEST AGAINST THE FORCES THAT WOULD UNDERMINE THE HOME, THE NATION, AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

TODAY MANY MARRIAGES, FRIENDSHIPS, AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS LACK FIRM COMMITMENT AND LOYALTY. BUT JESUS CHRIST STANDS AS OUR PERFECT ROLE MODEL. WE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM MUST STRIVE TO EMULATE HIS UNDYING LOYALTY TO THE FATHER AND FIRM RESOLVE TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT, NO MATTER HOW UNPOPULAR THE TEACHING OR NEGATIVE THE CONSEQUENCES. LOYALTY TO CHRIST DEMANDS THAT WE VIGOROUSLY OPPOSE WHATEVER FORCES THREATEN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

THIRD, JESUS FOUGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN THE TEMPLE TO RESTORE IT TO ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE AS A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE. THE TEMPLE WAS FOR WORSHIPPING GOD, NOT FOR DESECRATION AND PROFITEERING. IN RESTORING THE TEMPLE, JESUS WAS NOT ONLY MOVED BY LOVE FOR GOD, BUT ALSO FOR YOU AND ME. HE KNEW OUR SIN SEPARATED US FROM THE FATHER, AND HE EARNESTLY DESIRED TO RECONCILE US TO GOD. HE HAD COME TO EARTH TO REMOVE THE BARRIERS BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANKIND. COMMUNION WITH GOD COULD TAKE PLACE AT THE TEMPLE ONLY IF IT WAS CLEANSED AND RESTORED TO ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE. JESUS DID THIS SO THAT LOYAL WORSHIPPERS WHO WERE GENTILES, THAT IS, NON-JEWS, WOULD CONTINUE TO RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE THROUGH THEIR WORSHIP THERE.

IT'S DISTRESSING THAT THERE'S A LACK OF COMMITMENT IN MANY HOMES TODAY TO REGULAR, WEEKLY WORSHIP, AND THUS TO

GOD HIMSELF. A WEAK FAITH, LIKE AN ENGINE WITH DEFECTIVE SPARKPLUGS, SPUTTERS AND MISFIRES. HAVE PEOPLE BECOME SO ACCUSTOMED TO THE VISUAL SPLENDOR OF TELEVISION, MOVIES, AND VIDEO GAMES, AND THE GRANDEUR OF CONCERTS AND PROFESSIONAL SPORTING EVENTS THAT WORSHIP SEEMS DULL IN COMPARISON? COULD IT BE THAT PEOPLE JUST WANT TO BE ENTERTAINED IN CHURCH? LET'S REMEMBER THE TRUE PURPOSE OF WORSHIP: IT'S TO ENTER THE VERY REAL PRESENCE OF GOD, WHO COMES TO US THROUGH HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS, BESTOWING ON US HIS GIFTS OF FORGIVENESS, NEW LIFE, AND SALVATION.

CHRIST CONTINUES TO RESTORE TEMPLES TODAY. WE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING WITHIN US; WE ARE TEMPLES OF THE LIVING GOD. JESUS COMES TO US IN WORSHIP THROUGH THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS. HE CLEANSSES US AS TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, SANCTIFYING US, RENEWING OUR FAITH AND LOYALTY. YOU ARE SHOWING TRUE LOYALTY AND FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST BY BEING HERE TODAY.

JESUS ALSO UTTERED AN AMAZING PROMISE: ALTHOUGH HIS ENEMIES MIGHT DESTROY THE TEMPLE, HE WOULD RAISE IT AGAIN IN THREE DAYS. THESE WORDS SHOCKED THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES. THEY WOULD NEVER DESTROY THE TEMPLE. IT HAD TAKEN 46 YEARS FOR HEROD TO COMPLETE HIS MAGNIFICENT ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TEMPLE GROUNDS. HOW

COULD JESUS REBUILD ALL THIS IN JUST THREE DAYS? OUR TEXT TELLS US THAT JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY. AS THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD, AS GOD IN HUMAN FLESH, JESUS FULFILLED GOD'S PURPOSE BY DWELLING IN THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY AMONG HUMANKIND TO MAKE HIS GRACE AVAILABLE TO ALL. WHAT THE AUTHORITIES MISSED, THE DISCIPLES LATER RECALLED AFTER THEIR LORD JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHTIST, JESUS FULLY DEMONSTRATED HIS LOYALTY TO THE FATHER WHEN HE ENTERED THE WORLD AND GAVE HIS LIFE FOR OUR REDEMPTION. THE REAL TEMPLE OF HIS BODY WOULD BE TORN DOWN BY SCOURAGING, BEATING, NAILING, AND HANGING ON THE CROSS, YET DEATH WOULD NOT END HIS LIFE NOR OURS. AS THE AUTHOR OF LIFE, HE WOULD RISE AGAIN TO SHARE HIS LIFE WITH ALL BELIEVERS. ALTHOUGH THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES ATTEMPTED TO DESTROY HIS BODY OR TEMPLE, CHRIST'S RESURRECTION THWARTED THEIR PLAN. THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY WAS BUILT AGAIN IN THREE DAYS THROUGH THE GLORY OF THE FATHER. HIS VICTORY IS OUR VICTORY, EVEN AS ETERNAL LIFE IS NOW OURS. BY THE POWER OF JESUS' RESURRECTION, WE, TOO, ARE ABLE TO MASTER THE MOUNT OF LOYALTY. AMEN.