

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews facing a sanctuary with a large, colorful stained glass window. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams with several pendant lights hanging down. The date "MARCH 3, 2021" is printed at the top center of the image.

MARCH 3, 2021

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD FROM PASTOR JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. -*Pastor Jill*



The scripture for this week is from John 2:13-22. This passage is often called, "Jesus Cleansing the Temple". From the name, you might think Jesus was doing some spring cleaning by helping to spruce up the temple. But instead of dusting and disinfecting, Jesus made a big mess by turning over tables, throwing coins on the ground and letting animals roam free to show his disapproval of the practices of buying and selling sacrifices. Jesus made such a big mess because he wanted everyone to have free access to God.

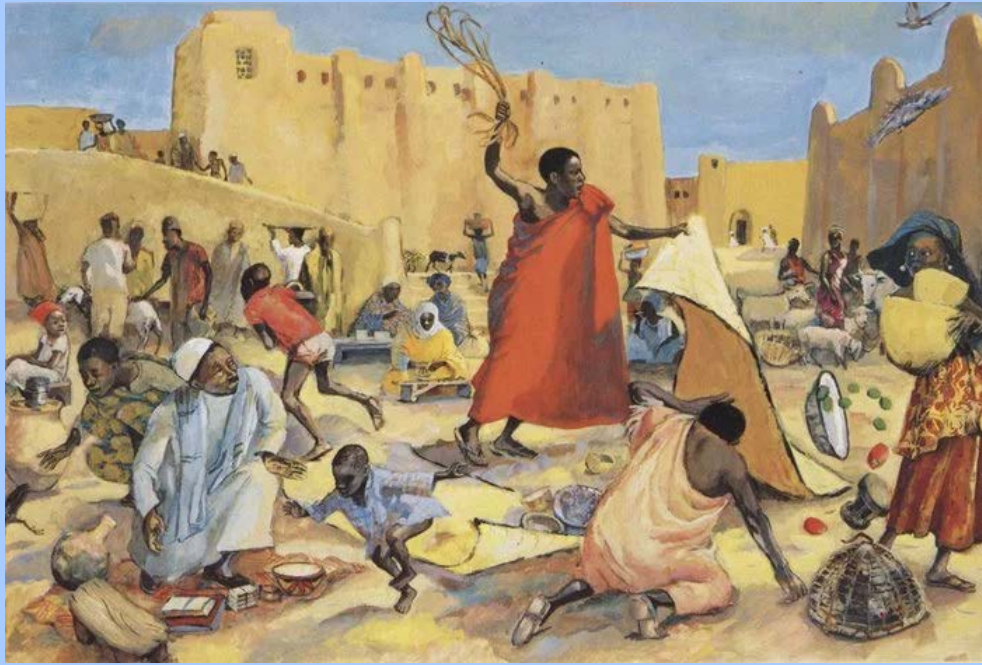
Reflect more on this passage on the following pages.



Read the passage:

John 2:13-22

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



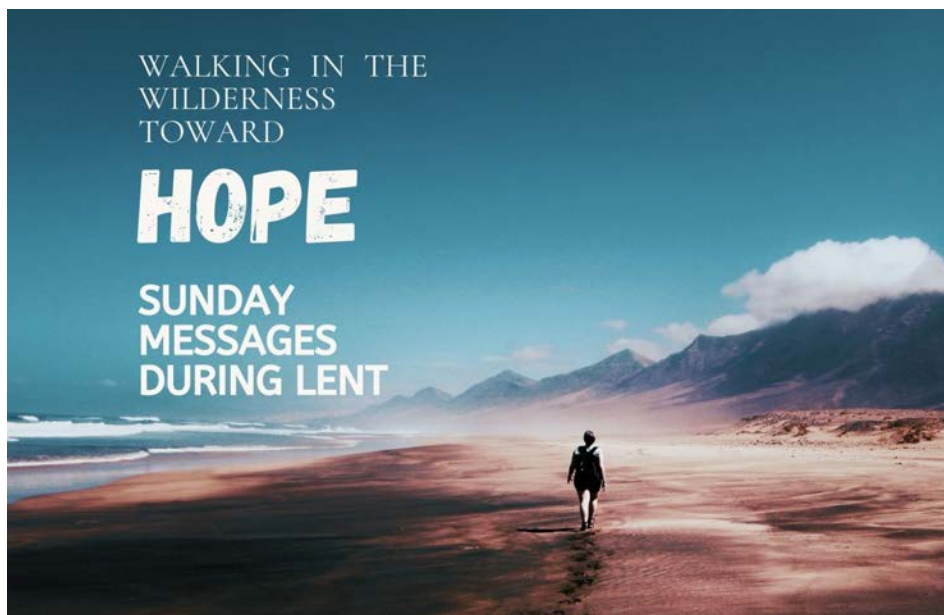
JESUS MAFA. Jesus drives out the merchants, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library

Reflect:

1. Jesus calls the Temple a “marketplace.” Why is he so angry? What can we learn from his anger?
2. How do you respond when you see people exploiting others or blocking access to God?
3. When and how can anger be used for good?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

Loving God, give us the courage to speak up when we see injustice. Remind us that there is nothing we need to buy or sell or do in order to have access to you. Amen.



We usually want to avoid the wilderness. Wilderness places are usually scary and lonely. But this Lent we are exploring how embracing the wilderness can lead us toward hope.

The Greek word traditionally translated “desert” or “wilderness” . . . doesn’t mean hot and dry. It means uninhabited, lonely, with no human population. . . . Every area of life has some potential to be desert. . . . The truth is that we must simply learn to live in the desert, must try to remain oriented toward God as we go on through the misery. The divine presence is not the way out of the desert, it is the way through the desert. Remain attentive to God, stay utterly dependent on God—this is the lesson of the desert.
—David Rensberger, *Weavings* (May/June 2001)

Whatever wilderness you are traveling through, know that God is with you. Bring your cares and concerns before God. Also, know that your church family wants to walk beside you to make the wilderness a little less lonely. The wilderness can be scary and lonely but it also a place where we can discover hope.



What Pastor Jill is
reading:
Native by Kaitlin Curtice

What Pastor Jill is
listening to:
'Creating God' episode on
the Hidden Brain Podcast

What Pastor Jill is
watching:
Amend on Netflix

**Please reach out to
a staff member if
you need financial,
emotional or
spiritual assistance.
As always, we are
here to help!**

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