

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

March 3, 2024

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 20: 1-17

Responsive Reading: Psalm 19

Epistle Reading: 1st Corinthians 1: 18-25

Gospel Reading: John 2: 13-22

Sermon: Give Me Three Days

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: God created the world in six days, Jesus remade the world in three.

Have you ever heard somebody say that “so and so is so good that he could do that in his sleep.”

If so, hold that thought. We’ll get back to that later.

During the season of Lent, we look at our past mistakes as individuals and as humanity. We practice prayer, fasting and self-denial. We do this to humble ourselves to allow God to work in and through us so that we may make positive changes as people and as “a” people. Although this is a good starting

place there seems to me that there are two other attitudes we need to embrace. These are acceptance and accountability.

As to acceptance, we need to recognize the awesome wisdom and compassion of our God as He has proved this to us through His Holy Word. Secondly, we need to accept the fact that we are accountable as a human race and have fallen way short of fulfilling our potential in His scheme.

Quick review.

God created the world and the universe in six days. At this time, we are not going to discuss whether this meant six twenty-four-hour days or six periods of time. Any who! God then spent thousands of years tweaking His creation using such personalities as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and then Moses.

At the time of Moses God gave us ten easy to understand and follow rules that we read in our Old Testament lesson from Exodus. Simply put; get on the same page recognizing and worshiping one God. Next, honor your body. Take a day off to recharge and refresh and avoid burnout. That done, preserve your future by “honor your mother and father”. If you do this, you learn from their mistakes and you won’t have to make them all over again. Good idea, we really should have tried it. The next five are simple common-sense things to avoid to keep peace in the community and tension out of your soul. Murder,

adultery, theft, lying for the community and avoid coveting for your own peace of mind. No rocket scientist is needed here.

If you still can't comprehend the "awesomeness" of God, check the Psalm reading. In Psalm 19: 1-6 we see how awesome God is in plain view. Verses 7 through 11 demonstrates how valuable God is to us. i.e. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Now comes the biggie. More to be desired than gold, sweeter than honey, and keeping them is a great reward. This is it. God is the one true treasure. Gold can be stolen. Stock markets can crash. Power can be defeated, and talent can be lost through age or disease. Only God will remain sturdy and sure. God is not only the best treasure, God is the only true treasure on Earth or anywhere in the universe.

This said, the psalmist asks God to help him avoid secret faults, or those sins that he does not realize are sins. He asks God, as we all should, that God will not let him get too big for his britches. Lastly, he says the prayer I always use before each sermon, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of {I

use our} my heart be acceptable in your sight, my strength and redeemer.”

According to the world these things do not make sense. In our Epistle reading Paul acknowledges this fact. Paul points out that we all seem to want proof. If we insist on trying to outthink God, we will never be able to accept the riches that He is freely giving us.

I say freely because now it is free, but that was not always the case. God paid an enormous price for our “FREE” gift.

We now go to the gospel of John. John has Jesus cleansing the temple in the very early life of His ministry. As a matter of fact, this comes right after the first sign of Jesus when He changed the water to wine. This may indicate that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice, once at the beginning of His ministry and one during passion week. Let’s not get hung up on that. We know that it happened at least once as it appears in all four gospels.

One point we seldom see is that in the Jewish culture the whip was not a tool for punishment or torture. It was used as a means to control and protect animals. This being the case we can surmise that Jesus was not punishing the “sinners” but was rather attempting to control a counter productive use of the Temple.

Of course, the religious elite could not fathom this and asked for a sign. Sound familiar? The answer that Jesus gave just confused them even more. They knew about Solomon's temple that held the Arc of the Covenant, but they had no concept of the body being a temple that housed the Holy spirit in all bodies that would follow Jesus The Christ. They understood the shallow reality of the Temple that they had grown up with but could in no way comprehend millions of living temples.

Remember when this message started that some people were so good at certain tasks "they could do them in their sleep"? Well Jesus one upped them. Jesus would not do it in His sleep, Jesus would do it from His grave and when He stepped out of that grave everything that their wisdom had taught them would be turned to foolishness. All their false Gods of money and power would be kicked to the curb and the only truly rich people would be those saved by the cross. Christ is the ONLY answer.

I would like to introduce you to the words of a song that show what real security wealth consists of.

He Will Hold Me Fast

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast. When the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast. I could never keep my hold, through life's fearful path, For my love is often cold, He must hold me fast.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast, For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

Those He saves are His delight, Christ will hold me fast. Precious in His holy sight, He will hold me fast. He'll not let my soul be lost, His promises shall last, Bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast, For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast. Justice has been satisfied, He will hold me fast. Raised to Him in endless life, He will hold me fast, Till our faith is turned to sight, when He comes at last!

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast, For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

Tear down this temple and I will raise it up in three days. And He did! Hallelujah and Amen!