



In a world of seriousness and a Church of purity, the Lectionary calls us to a strange way of being this week – foolishness. The cross, which is God's wisdom and God's strength, is placed alongside the law in the readings this week, and as we examine these two themes side by side, we discover that they are actually both calling us to the same thing – as surprising as that may sound.

Come to worship as a fool this week, and allow God's foolish wisdom and God's weak strength to transform you!

Image: Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, Cathedrale d'Amiens

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Exodus 20 : 1-7

Our weekly readings continue the theme of God's covenants with his people. He requires obedience to his commandments, the heart of the Jewish Law and a foundation of Christian moral principles.

The Psalm - Psalm 19

A psalm that celebrates how creation reveals God's glory and wisdom and how God's commands and teachings are more valuable than anything, making those who follow them wise. Then a call for God to forgive hidden sins follows the song of praise.

1 Corinthians 1 : 18-25

To proclaim Christ nailed to a cross seems offensively foolish, says Paul., yet in reality it displays God's loving wisdom and mysterious saving power!

John 2 : 13-22

As we near the time to remember again the fateful confrontation between Jesus and the Temple authorities, we hear John's account of Jesus driving out all those who perverted the Temple's purposes for personal gain. From his resurrection perspective, John reflects on what his event means.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Exodus%2020:%201-17%0Acw%20Psalm%2019%0A1%20Corinthians%201:%2018-25%0AJohn%202:%2013-22

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

We beseech thee, Almighty God,
mercifully to look upon thy people;
that by thy great goodness
they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Merciful Lord,
Grant your people grace to withstand the temptations
of the world, the flesh and the devil
and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

Today as we gather in our Father's house, let us earnestly pray to God whose steadfast love embraces all generations.

Deacon or other leader

For God's temple throughout the world, and for the holy people who gather in the name of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For *NN* our catechumen(s) and *NN* their sponsors(s).

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Lord, have mercy.

For the victims of greed, violence, and slavery, and for all who are in need.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city and community, and for all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Blessed are you, God of power and wisdom, who gave us Christ crucified, Christ raised from the dead. Receive the prayers we offer this day for us in our weakness and for all peoples everywhere; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

P Lord of the Church, graciously abide with Your holy Church as she proclaims the Gospel and administers the sacraments. Make all pastors diligent to preach Your holy Word, and strengthen us, through the Gospel of grace and the power of Your Holy Spirit, to lead holy lives according to it. Preserve the congregations of our Synod in peace and harmony as we walk together in a common confession of the faith. Equip our Bishop _____, the Diocesan Council (*Synod*) with zeal in faithfully fulfilling the responsibilities You have given them. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P O Gracious God, You abundantly provide everything we need to care for our bodies and lives. We thank You for our homes, our food and clothing, our families, and all our possessions. We humbly pray that by Your Spirit You would grant us a generous spirit, that we may manage all that You so graciously give to us in service to You and to others. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Almighty God, because of Your tender love toward us sinners, You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Hear our prayers on behalf of those who think that You have turned away from them because of hardships they face. Abide with those who doubt Your gracious love. Shield them from the devil's temptations, and wrap them in Your love. As we seek to help those with doubts, use our ears to patiently listen and our mouths to carefully speak the assurance of Your constant presence in their lives through Word and Sacrament. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Everlasting God, through Your Son You have promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek Your help and, by a true and lively faith in Your Word, obtain all that You have promised. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Heavenly Father, keep safe all of our families. Keep all harm and danger far from them. Bless those who have pledged their loving commitment to each other and are now preparing for their exchange of marital vows. Grant Your blessings to all married couples that their lives together may be blessed with wisdom, purity, self-sacrifice, and love. Be with all young persons so that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your Word. Increase the faith of those whose increasing years

bring weakness, anxiety, distress, or loneliness. Be the Rock and Refuge of Your people as they face unique challenges in all times of life. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Comfort all those who suffer illness or pain (*especially* _____) with the assurance that because You are their light and salvation they have no need to fear. If it pleases You, O Lord, restore these, Your people, to health, or give them grace to accept their tribulation with courage and hope. Enkindle steadfast faith in those who mourn the death of loved ones (*especially* _____). In faith, cause them to grieve with hope, as they look to You and Your constant promise of forgiveness and life everlasting to all believers. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Dear Savior, at Your gracious invitation we come to Your altar/table to eat and drink Your holy body and blood. Let us find favour in Your eyes to receive this holy Sacrament in faith for the salvation of our souls and to the glory of Your holy name. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Into Your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Lord our God,
you feed us in this life with bread from heaven,
the pledge and foreshadowing of future glory.
Grant that the working of this sacrament within us
may bear fruit in our daily lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,
in the glory of the cross
your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.
In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death
to the light of the resurrection.
Remain with us and give us hope
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit
who gives life to our mortal flesh,
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faithful God of love,
you blessed us with your servant Son
so that we might know how to serve your people
with justice and with mercy.
We gather the needs of ourselves and others,
and offer them to you in faith and love,
seeking to be strengthened to meet them.
Shape us and transform us by your grace,
that we may grow in wisdom and in confidence,
never faltering until we have done all that you desire
to bring your realm of shalom to fulfillment. Amen.

Holy One, creator of the stars and seas,
your steadfast love is shown to every living thing:
your word calls forth countless worlds and souls;
your law revives and refreshes.
Forgive our misuse of your gifts,
that we may be transformed by your wisdom
to manifest for others
the mercy of our crucified and risen Lord. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Exodus 20:1-17:

- The Ten Commandments - all the rage in the last couple years with courtroom battles. People have spent a lot of energy defending these commandments. Are they worth defending? Do we follow as well as defend? While I don't feel they need to be posted in our courtrooms, I think they are still pretty important for us.

- The ones I am most drawn to are the first commandments. God is God and our only God. We might not worship other deities, but sometimes we're in danger of worshipping our possessions, our work, our culture, or our country. We may not make golden calf idols, but we idolize plenty of things, don't we?
- "Remember the Sabbath." This is so hard for me. We're recently started a twice-weekly prayer chapel at our church - 30 minutes to be still and be with God. I find even that hard. My mind is always racing over my to-do list. How do you keep Sabbath?
- Coveting - that's another commandment that I think is so important. We always want what we don't have, no matter how much we do have. How do we live a life of gratitude?

Psalm 19:

- "The heavens are telling the glory of God." These famous words from the Psalm are often set to music.
- This imagery of the sun "like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy", this personification of the sun draws to my mind Greek/Roman mythology, and no doubt made contemporaries of the psalmist think of similar images of sun-gods in other religions. The difference? Here the sun is put into place by God, not a god in itself.
- God is more than gold, sweeter than honey. A simple message - but reminds us of things we put too often before God in our lives.
- "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations..." This verse is often used by pastors before they begin preaching. I like it, but if there's a way to use a Bible verse too much to the point of over doing, this one makes it on my personal list!

1 Corinthians 1:18-25:

- "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..." I don't know what to make of this verse, because I too often see it used as a "Jesus is the only way, see?" tool. But let's revamp it. An instrument of weakness is made into an instrument of power. That is what God does to things. Gives them a whole new life, and a whole new meaning.
- That theme carries into the whole passage - God doesn't just change meanings of things around, but meanings of people. We're flipped inside out by this 'foolishness' of Jesus Christ.
- Compare this passage with the value of Wisdom we see in Proverbs. I think Paul is discounting being worldly-wise instead of God-wise. Better a fool for God than wise for the world?

John 2:13-22:

"my Father's house a marketplace." Maybe we don't have malls in our churches (maybe!), but how do we take the holy out of our holy places? Churches often play dangerous games with marketing and commercialism. Where do we draw lines? "he drove all of them out" - this is one of few times we see Jesus so confrontational. When in your faith are you moved to be confrontational? What is worth making a scene?

In verse 21, John gives his take on Jesus' words in verse 19. What would you think Jesus meant?

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Two seemingly unrelated themes come together this week. The first is God's gift of the law, and the value of God's law which brings wisdom. The Exodus passage is the account of the people of Israel receiving the law and the list of the ten commandments (or Ten Words, as they are sometimes known), and Psalm 19 celebrates God's instruction which is revealed both in nature and in the Law. The second theme is the foolishness of God's wisdom which is shown through the cross, which Jesus cryptically points to, in the Gospel reading, as the proof of his authority to cleanse the Temple. Finally, today's well known Epistle reading demonstrates how the cross, which appears to be weakness and foolishness, is actually God's saving strength and wisdom. There is a tension here. The law can appear to be a call to both strength and wisdom, and the foolishness that the apostle speaks about is not immediately apparent. However, when the basis of the law is recognised – love for God (the first four commandments) and love for neighbour (the last six commandments) – the foolishness becomes clear. For a people who had just been delivered from slavery, these commandments represented the opposite of the life and systems of power and wealth that they had known in Egypt. They were offered as a liberating guide for the life of a free people. In the same way, the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus is a "foolish" act, undermining the corrupt systems of power and wealth that had crept into the religious and national life of God's people. His act was a liberating, prophetic act revealing how a liberated people, a people of God's Reign, should live. When questioned about his authority, Jesus pointed not to power or wealth, but to the giving of his life for the sake of love. The question that is posed, then, this week, is whether we will embrace the foolishness of God's law of love and live it out as Christ did in selfless sacrifice and service, or not.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: The marks of human "wisdom" are seen across our world. When we feel threatened, we simply accumulate more and bigger weapons than our enemies. When we fear scarcity, we simply take what we want, hoard and protect it, and, if necessary, destroy those who compete with us for resources, or who have what we want. When we feel insecure or out of control, we simply court those in power, and manipulate our way into positions of power and control, and then "play the system" in our favour. And, in our wake lie the broken remains of lives, institutions and even our planet, that are the victims of our "strength" and "wisdom". But, sooner or later, some weak and foolish prophet reveals the truth of our lives and values, and they come tumbling down around us. It is always the jesters who can speak truth to power, and when the truth of our so-called "achievements" are revealed, the world inevitably changes significantly. This is what we have seen in so many parts of our world, from the way the internet has undermined the power of large recording and publishing companies, to the Occupy movements, to the Arab Spring. When the weak and foolish live in their "counter-cultural" way, the result is always greater freedom, life and peace for all. If there is anything we need in our world

now it is foolish leaders who will have the courage to defy the accepted wisdom of our world that gives power to the few and widens the gulf between rich and poor. And we need communities of foolish people who will take the Gospel of Christ seriously and seek to live it out in the weakness and foolishness of love, inclusion, generosity, justice and peace.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Our scarcity mentality seems wise, and "winning" in a world based upon such wisdom requires us to be strong. But, in our relationships, our refusal to be vulnerable and weak leaves us alone and disconnected from each other. In our communities, our refusal to share resources leaves us afraid and suspicious of one another. In our societies, our refusal to challenge the "accepted wisdom" of our organisations, structures and systems leaves us with a few who enjoy wealth and power, and many who struggle to survive. Even in our churches, the tendency to adopt the same power dynamics and wealth-driven strategies of the society around us has weakened our witness, and made it impossible for us to influence the world to embrace Gospel ways of being. Yet, there are those who seek to follow Christ, and who willingly take the risk of foolishness and weakness for the sake of others. It is these fools who reveal the poverty of our systems and wisdoms, and who call us back to the simple laws of love for God and neighbour. It is these fools who show us a different way – a Jesus way – of living, of treating one another, and of building community. The challenge this week is for us to decide whether we will be one of those fools, or, like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, collaborate with the system. This applies to the "small" context of our homes and families to the "larger" contexts of church and community – in all of which situations we can seek power and control, or treat our spouses, children and neighbours with the foolishness of love and collaboration.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Psalm 19 :8

America - What is true religion by John R Donahue. The customary short homily blending together the psalm and the Gospel for today. Well worth reading for its own sake.
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=602

John 2:13-22

Episcopal - Scroll down to sermon by Ken Kesselus. Once past a longish intro there is good stuff on the 10 Commandments.
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2009/03/?cat=7>

["Foolish Wisdom,"](#) the Rev. Canon Brian Cole, *Day 1*, 2012.

For as long as people have followed the way of Jesus, there has been foolishness.

A preacher I heard in college once tried to tell us that. He was a British Methodist and he preached for fifty-five minutes. But I hung on every word. The accent helped but it was more than that. He spoke about the eccentrics he knew in his life and the foolishness of the cross.

I heard another preacher in seminary tell us about the foolishness of the Gospel. He reminded us of Judy Collins and sending in the clowns and rodeos in Forth Worth with clowns jumping out of barrels and entertaining the children until it was time to distract bulls from the cowboys who had fallen from them. Fools and clowns and eccentrics and Jesus--all were telling us this was the way it had always been.

http://day1.org/3634-foolish_wisdom

["Foolishness,"](#) Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.

Here is Frederick Buechner's take on **1 Corinthians 1:18-25**, from "Paul Sends His Love" in [Secrets in the Dark](#):

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-foolishness>

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Lent 3B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/year-b-third-sunday-in-lent-march-11.html>

Children's literature - uses a summary of each of three titles of books for youngsters to comment on the respective biblical passages. Regard them as starters. Danger is that the kids will probably know more about the books than us! Produce by students, staff and alumni of Union Presbyterian Seminary..

<http://storypath.wordpress.com/2012/02/11/lectionary-links-sunday-march-11-2012/>

["Sermon of the Week,"](#) / ["Mensajes para ninos,"](#) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Colouring Pages, Puzzles.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

["What We Are Called to Be,"](#) Frances Woodruff, *On the Chancel Steps*. **1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/02/26/called/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[Love Divine, All Loves Excelling](#)

[Rock Of Ages Cleft For Me](#)

[Trust And Obey](#)

[Christ Is Made The Sure Foundation](#)

[Forth In Thy Name, O Lord](#)

[The Ten Commandments Song](#)

[Let Me Shine](#)

[Love](#)

[King Of Fools](#) (Link to YouTube video)

[Undignified](#) (Link to YouTube video)

[God's Own Fool](#) (Link to YouTube video)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title

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