

Third Sunday, March 7

Psalm 19

John 2:13–22

Jesus said to the dove sellers [in the temple], “Get these things out of here! Don’t make my Father’s house a place of business.” His disciples remembered that it is written, Passion for your house consumes me (John 2:16–17 CEB).

Joyce MacKichan Walker

JESUS’ DISCIPLES are remembering a lament psalm, a desperate prayer of petition and complaint to God. The psalm writer is overwhelmed by those who hate and insult the psalmist because of love for God and God’s house. “Because passion for your house has consumed me, the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me!” (Psalm 69:9 CEB).

Here is Jesus, angrily turning the tables on the profiteers and reclaiming God’s house of worship for its rightful purpose. Those who insult God by their actions will indeed turn their insults on Jesus. Jesus’ passion will indeed bring down on him hatred and insult, resentment and jealousy, danger and, ultimately, death.

But it’s early days in John’s Gospel. There’s been a wedding—if you stayed late you were there for the best wine. That’s it. Well, not everything. There was that call, personally, by name, to follow Jesus. And that promise, “You will see greater things than these” (John 1:50).

Followers of Jesus remember, “Passion for your house consumes me.” Will we keep ours through a pandemic in which God’s house stands ready, but not yet? In which God’s house is our easy chair, a side table with a scavenged bit of bread and apple juice, and a clicked link? In which God’s house—where our presence is needed—is the neighbor’s house with back rent, the hungry’s empty cupboard, the refugee’s cold tent? Where will you witness to your passion for God’s house in these days?

Consume us, O God, with passion for the community that is the body of Christ. May our longing increase as we open our hands and our hearts to a world of need, for it is you who sends us to serve. Amen.

Since Joyce retired as minister of education and mission in 2018, she is enjoying teaching, writing, reading mysteries and other genres, and traveling COVID-19 safe with Michael in their second-hand RV-van. It's easy to social distance in state and national parks and campgrounds! She misses in-person worship and hands-on mission engagement, but loves daily outdoor walks, virtual adult education programs, and opportunities to learn new things.

Monday, March 8

Psalm 58

Do your rulers indeed speak justly?

Do you judge people with equity? (Psalm 58:1 NIV).

Joshua Stucky

The first question the psalmist asks in this verse is a question that I think many of us have been asking ourselves the past few months, and probably the past few years. With the major change in leadership that has been happening in this country, this is an important question that we need to keep asking ourselves. We cannot allow ourselves to think that the fights for racial justice, social justice, and economic equality are over yet. We must continue to show God's love to everyone we encounter, no matter how different we may be from them. Most importantly, we must continue to peacefully spread the peace, joy, love, and equality of God's kingdom in our homes, our towns, our states, our countries, and the world.

The next question the psalmist asks is more personal, asking us to look inside ourselves to see if we personally are living out the example that God sets for us. The call for equity is especially important as our country itself cries out for the exact same thing. As we can see through Jesus' example, change starts at an individual level. Only by first confronting our own in-

iquities—in the way we think, speak, and act—can we help further God’s kingdom in this world.

Lord, let me help your kingdom come and your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Let me be the daily bread of others so that they too can feel your love. Let my conscience not be replaced by a faceted view of this world, but instead let your word give me conscience, so that I may have eyes to see and ears to hear the troubles of this world, and hands and feet to help. Amen.

Joshua is a junior at Princeton High School who enjoys spending time working at the local bike shop, making all manner of things out of cardboard, and spending time with friends and family—safely, of course! He is grateful for all of the wonderful opportunities that Nassau has given him to grow and explore his faith. He wishes you all good health and safety as the pandemic continues.

Tuesday, March 9

Psalm 61

Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I call to you,
when my heart is faint.
Lead to the rock that is higher than I;
for you are my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy.
Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your wings (Psalm 61:1–4 NRSV).

Jan Giles

THE PSALMIST IS ALONE, AFRAID.

Comfort is found in the promise of God’s presence, protection, to life in the shelter of the Lord, the shadow of the “sun-bathing” wing. The covenant’s promise calms and comforts the psalmist.

In all, not just loneliness and despair. *In all our life*, one can be in the

shelter of the Lord. It is there, there in our days, before our eyes, in all of the creator's world. Our Lord wishes us to ask and be in this love. *Knock and the door will be opened for you* (Matthew 7:7 NRSV).

We must accept and take shelter given as God deems for us, beyond how we have formed or imagined that shelter to be, open to the gifts and grace of God.

When I listen, quiet myself and allow all of me to observe, there are multitudes of drops of God's grace, love everywhere and I relish and try to catch more drops... create a puddle. I am astonished by the encompassing presence of the Lord for us to witness and accept. The glorious peace in that space pulls me in and I crave the euphoria of this splendor and love.

Then I dissect the how, the connections and creation of the one small piece I have held.

I am unable to make sense and I abandon reason and fall to my faith. I revel in the glory of the ubiquitous omnipotent love of God and I fall into the swaddled warmth of love.

Dear Lord, I humbly pray, I am thankful for trials and tribulations, joy and elations, discoveries, challenges, and path finding. Your shelter allows me to live and grow in love and life, protected by your wings of grace. Amen.

Jan was raised in Cleveland, Ohio in a home filled with quiet, living faith and love. Through the years of raising her children at Nassau Church, she has found a reservoir of faith she had not known. She is inspired and led by that faith. Although she often falters and falls, her church community and gifts like writing Lenten devotionals, constantly return her to her journey in faith.

Wednesday, March 10

Mark 11:15–19

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts (Mark 11:15–16 NIV).

Jay Dunn

EVERY CHRISTIAN is familiar with this episode of Christ's ministry. Jesus discovered that the temple of God had been turned into a 1st century version of a shopping mall and had ceased to be a house of worship. According to Mark, and two of the other Gospel writers, this occurred only a few days before he was betrayed, arrested and crucified. I've always suspected that the bribe paid to Judas to betray our Lord came from one of the evicted merchants.

I have been fortunate enough to visit the Vatican twice in my life. Even though I am not Roman Catholic, I nonetheless marveled at the expanse dedicated to the Christian ministry. In particular, gazing at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel took my breath away.

But the moment I left the Vatican the ambiance was totally different. The blocks around the Vatican are filled with souvenir and gift shops. Vendors roam the streets, hawking everything from postcards to jewelry. Everyone is trying to separate visitors from their money. Is this really different from the temple in Jerusalem that Jesus encountered?

Father, help us to remember that our love of God should never be impacted by our desire for wealth. Help us to treasure that which is holy and never confuse it with that which is monetary. Amen.

Jay is a semi-retired sports writer. His baseball column appears each week in *The Trentonian*.

Thursday, March 11

Psalm 69

Save me, God, because the waters have reached my neck!

I have sunk into deep mud. My feet can't touch the bottom!

I have entered deep water; the flood has swept me up.

I am tired of crying. My throat is hoarse.

My eyes are exhausted with waiting for my God! (Psalm 69:1–3 CEB).

Anne Kuhn

I had always skipped over Psalm 69 in favor of more familiar, briefer Psalms. Now, having read it thoughtfully, it seems to have come at just the right time, a fitting description of my emotional journey over the past year. In this song of lament, David cries out to God with astonishing intensity and honesty. Reading these verses over and over, I wondered what must have been happening to him. I learned that some biblical scholars believe this song was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the imprisonment of the Jewish people by Nebuchadnezzar, around 587 BCE.

David's song begins with the plea of an utterly helpless and hopeless person. His emotion intensifies with expressions of frustration and anger (*More numerous than the hairs on my head are those who hate me for no reason* v. 4a), repentance (*God, you know my foolishness, my wrongdoings aren't hidden from you* v. 5), empathy (*Don't let those who seek you be disgraced because of me* v.6b) and humiliation (*I wept while I fasted—even for that I was insulted...people made fun of me* vv. 10, 11b). At the end, exhausted and emotionally spent, David's mood shifts. He realizes that God is still there, God is faithful and will never abandon his people (*You who seek God—let your hearts beat strong again because the Lord listens to the needy and doesn't despise his captives* vv. 32b, 33). In the fullness of God's own time, God will restore the people to their homeland. With this reassurance, David gives thanks and praise to God.

God, we are discouraged, tired from crying, and exhausted. Hear our prayers and grant us peace in knowing that no matter what happens in our world, you are faithful and loving and will never abandon us. Amen.

Anne is a certified executive coach and HR consultant practicing in Greater Philadelphia, New York City and central New Jersey. She joined Nassau Church in 2008 and is a deacon, a member of the Human Resources Committee, and co-chair of the Mass Incarceration Task Force. She is married to Jeff Kuhn and the mother of Paul (who lives in Cincinnati) and Sara (in Atlanta).

Friday, March 12

Psalms 70 and 71

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord. Mine enemies speak against me (Psalm 70:1 KJV).

Mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together (Psalm 71:10 KJV).

Mark Herr

NOTHING TERRIFIES more than vulnerability. You alone are at the mercy of classmates. You're old in a job market that cuts out candidates at 55. You're gay in a sea of straights. You're the only Black woman in the office. You're the only white kid on the team.

C'mon, God, get the lead out. I'm dying here.

Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying (Psalm 70:5b KJV).

No tarrying, Lord. On the hop. On the double. In a New York minute. I NEED YOU NOW, GOD!

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion (Psalm 71:1 KJV).

I'm depending on you, God.

Incline thine ear unto me and save me (Psalm 71:2b KJV) Thou art my rock and my fortress (Psalm 71:3c KJV).

You're more than just my rock; you're all I've got. You've seen me through broken hearts and busted wallets. You've nursed me back from failure, from social faux pas and academic face plants. You've walked with me through cancer's shadow of death and don't let them kid you, God, I feared. I fear, every day, in ways limited only by my imagination.

What's that, Lord? You're with me? Yes, I can do this now.

I will go in the strength of the Lord God (Psalm 71:16a KJV). Let all those that seek thee rejoice and...say continually, "Let God be magnified!" (Psalm 70:4 KJV).

Deliver us. O my God, out of the hands of the wicked, out of the hands of the unrighteous and from cruel men and women. Even more, deliver us from ourselves. Before we begin to pluck the mote out of our brothers' and sisters' eyes, make us remember the beams in our own. Save us from the others, O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but most of all, save us from us. Amen.

Mark is getting ready to mark his 35th year as a member of Nassau Church. He is easily the worst dressed parishioner every Sunday, particularly when he sits next to his wife Rachel.

Saturday, March 13

Numbers 20:22–29

Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up Mount Hor. Strip Aaron of his clothes and put them on Eleazar his son. Then Aaron will die there (Numbers 20:25–26 CEB).

Anne Thomsen Lord

AS A CHILD, I remember thinking how unfair it seemed for Moses and Aaron to be denied entry to the Promised Land. The brothers made mistakes, but they led the Israelites for forty years. Surely, their good service outweighed the bad. Today I see a more generous God than my elementary school self did.

Early this year, a YMCA co-worker wondered out loud, “Hiltrud hasn’t been here in a while.” He was right. She came to swim almost every morning, and we hadn’t seen her since Christmas.

I dismissed his concern thinking she might be spending more time at her daughter’s over the holidays. She’d probably be back tomorrow.

Instead, the next day, I learned the YMCA had been notified: Hiltrud died on December 27th. Her last check-in was the 22nd.

For years Hiltrud was part of my daily life. Suddenly, she was gone. I’d never exchange “good mornings” with her again or hear another story of her childhood in war-torn Europe.

Aaron didn’t make it to the Promised Land, but he was given the gift of notice. God revealed when Aaron’s earthly life would end, and he spent his final moments on a mountain with family.

Hiltrud is one of many whom I have seen for the last time not knowing it was the last time. Life is fragile. Most of us will not be as lucky as Aaron and know so much about our impending deaths. I don’t know if I wished Hiltrud a Merry Christmas. I hope so.

Dear God, Help us recognize your gifts. Amen.



Anne is a deacon, ruling elder, and mother of four. She works early in the morning as a lifeguard at the Princeton YMCA, and she loves her swimmers very much.