



Church of the Epiphany

FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Lent 3 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • March 23, 2025



Collect for Lent 3

Heavenly Father, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you: Look with compassion upon the heartfelt desires of your servants, and purify our disordered affections, that we may behold your eternal glory in the face of Christ Jesus; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Readings for Lent 3

Exodus 3:1-15
Psalm 103:1-12
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-17

Let all that is within us

Praise His holy Name. AMEN

Good Morning! The season of Lent isn't usually a time for celebration, but I am urging that today we celebrate the richness of our liturgy and lectionary in how they meld together to direct our focus during this time of worship. Please recall our prayer in the Collect for this Third Sunday of Lent. Among other things, we asked the Lord to ". . . purify our disordered affections." Do you remember that phrase in the prayer? My initial impression was that the words sounded like an *indirect* description of sin, kind of like what politicians do when they have been caught lying. You know how that works. They, or more often their spokesperson, will admit that the statement in question was "less than candid." As if a lie were not a lie! On a deeper level, however, the usage in the Collect makes sense by acknowledging how we humans often act in our relationship with Almighty God. Consider how often our affections stray to ideas and fantasies and feelings, and even to people and pleasures, that are not consistent with God's good order for us. In that sense, our affections are indeed "disordered" and need to be purified. Note also that the words "disordered affections" help explain the next preceding phrase in the Collect, in which we prayed, "Look with compassion upon the heartfelt desires of your servants." Why do we pray for compassion on our heartfelt desires? Well, there is "disorder" there, too. Just because our desires are heartfelt doesn't make those desires healthy ones. One ancient author explained the problem this way, "The energy absorbed in compulsive, obsessive, disordered,

fixated behavior is energy unavailable for authentic relationship with God, with one's true self, with others." So today we prayed for compassion upon the earthly strivings of our hearts and for purification of our sin-tainted perception of reality. We may not like being confronted this way, but we have to admit that our affections are indeed disordered and in need of purifying. So in today's Collect, whether we fully realized it or not, we confessed a lot about ourselves, perhaps more indirectly than what we do in our corporate confession, but maybe more pointedly. Now that you know what you were really saying, I commend the prayer in this Collect to you as part of your daily prayers this next week. Call it part of your Lenten discipline if you wish.

Now how does this relate to our Lectionary readings for today? Let's take a look, starting with the reading from Exodus, in which God appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Moses' reaction when he realized that it was indeed Almighty God was described in verse 6, "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." His reaction should not surprise us, for the prevailing belief was that no one could see God face to face and live to tell about it. Remember that God also told Moses to take off his shoes, for he was standing on holy ground. Yet God answered Moses' question about His Name, explaining that He is the great I AM. We can see that Moses had no doubt about how magnificent God really was. And so what might our response to a burning bush show about us? And remember that just a few minutes ago, we were singing about standing on holy ground.

In our reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds his readers in the first few verses of Chapter 10 that we all came from the same place as the early Hebrews. All were baptized, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. In that sense, Moses is the ancestor of us all. But even so, verse 5,

"Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Those early Hebrews, I am sure you remember, followed Moses out of Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. That was their baptism. And even though they had seen God act so dramatically, and even though God was present with them as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day, they still wandered, their affections became disordered, and at the end of verse 5, ". . . they were overthrown in the wilderness." Paul goes on to explain that they were examples for us, that we might not, like them, desire evil, worship idols, indulge in sexual immorality, and put Christ to the test with our grumbling. Those who did so were destroyed in various ways. Paul even cautions us, don't think it can't happen to you, v. 12, "Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." He also goes on to assure us in the next two verses, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." And so we pray today, purify our disordered affections, Lord, that we might not be overthrown with them!

We heard other examples in today's Gospel reading from Luke, chapter 13. In the first several verses, the question was which sinners were worse than others. Of course, we never compare ourselves to others, right? Jesus' answer was pretty straightforward - sin is sin, period, verse 5, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Then Jesus sets forth the parable of the barren fig tree. Now I have not yet found a commentator who agrees with me, but the thought came to me some time ago, even after I had read this passage numerous times before, that the fig tree is like those people I know who don't seem to be good for much of anything. Perhaps you know people like that, maybe people in your own family. You ask yourself (never out loud), why did God put that good-for-nothing so-and-

so on this earth? He has been that way for three years now. The world would be better off without him! Jesus goes on to tell us, in parable form, to be patient with such people, just as God is patient with you. Perhaps a little nurture and encouragement is what is needed. We don't have to be in a hurry to do away with those whom we see as simply useless. Maybe there are times when you feel useless or worse, when you fear that God sees you as useless. Judgment, we all know, is better left in God's hands in His good time.

In contrast, then, we see the synagogue leader in the next several verses. He is the one who demanded too much order. That was his "disordered affection." Don't come to the synagogue for healing on the Sabbath, he said, we are too busy worshipping by congratulating ourselves for obeying the rules! Jesus confronted them directly, verse 15, "You hypocrites!" You care more about your donkey's daily water ration than about the long-endured suffering and oppression of your own sister!

You see how this all comes together? The majesty and power of our God are unfathomable! And we are here to celebrate and to worship Him! And so, we remember the teaching in the parables, we remember the lessons of Paul, we remember the burning bush, and we praise God with psalms like Psalm 103 which we read today. We acknowledge God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in our worship every Sunday. And yet we find it so easy to rock along the rest of the week as if He were simply an idle spectator while we act out the drama of life. We find time and energy for all kinds of idols and in doing so neglect to nurture a vibrant, authentic relationship with our God and with our brothers and sisters. And so we pray, indeed let us pray every day, "Come, Lord Jesus, look with compassion upon the heartfelt desires of your servants, and purify our disordered affections, that we may behold your eternal glory in the face of Christ Jesus; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever." AMEN. Fr. Frank

Prayer List - 3/23/25

Resurrection Anglican Fellowship,
Greenwood Village, CO
Fr. Phil Eberhardt

Bishop Steven and Tricia

Those who need your healing care and strength:

Donya Conine
Denise Seif
Walter Ford
David and Jessie Brinkley
Elijah Nix
Luis and Kelle Senge
Ellie
Rev. Shelby Moon
Esther & Joel Fyock , Lydia Tran
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendes
The Camacho family
The Cozart family

Those in the Armed Forces:

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa
Creed Napier, US Air Force,
J.W. Grove, US Navy
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-McChord
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong
Wyatt Green, US Navy
Emma Skidmore, US Navy, OCS

We pray for our Epiphany family:

Frank and Carolyn Wilson; the Zima family,
Jeff Jessup
Patrick Zima
Martha Vance
Aubrey and Mary Tucker

Lessons for Lent 3
March 23, 2025
Anglican Lectionary
year C

Old Testament Reading

Exodus 3:1-15

3 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. **3** And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." **4** When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." **5** Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." **6** And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. **7** Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, **8** and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9** And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. **10** Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." **11** But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" **12** He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." **13** Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the

people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" **14** God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'" **15** God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Psalm 103:1-12

1 Praise the LORD, O my soul, *
and all that is within me, praise his holy Name.
2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, *
and forget not all his benefits:
3 Who forgives all your sin *
and heals all your infirmities,
4 Who saves your life from the pit *
and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness,
5 Who satisfies you with good things, *
renewing your youth like an eagle's.
6 The LORD executes righteousness and judgment *
for all those who are oppressed with wrong.
7 He showed his ways to Moses, *
his works to the children of Israel.
8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, *
long-suffering and of great goodness.
9 He will not always chide us, *
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so great is his mercy also toward those who fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he set our sins from us.

New Testament Reading

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

10 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. **2** They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. **3** They all ate the same spiritual food **4** and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. **6** Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. **7** Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." **8** We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did - and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. **9** We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. **10** And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. **11** These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. **12** So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **13** No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

The Holy Gospel

Luke 13:1-17

13 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. **2** And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?

3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. **4** Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? **5** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." **6** And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. **7** And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' **8** And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. **9** Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" **10** Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. **11** And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. **12** When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." **13** And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. **14** But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." **15** Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? **16** And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" **17** As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

