

SUNDAY March 8, 2026 “A House for God’s Glory”
Exodus 20:1-7 Psalm 19 Ref2 740 John 2: 13-22

A popular book a number of years ago by Robert Fulghum is entitled: “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten”. In this book, the author outlines what he deemed to be important rules for living. These include:

1. Share everything.
2. Play fair.
3. Don't hit people.
4. Put things back where you found them.
5. CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS.
6. Don't take things that aren't yours.
7. Say you're SORRY when you HURT somebody.
8. Wash your hands before you eat.
9. Flush.
10. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
11. Live a balanced life - learn some and drink some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work everyday some.
12. Take a nap every afternoon.

Other people have different rules in which they follow: 1. Bring your sense of humour with you at all times. 2. If it's worth crying over, it's probably worth laughing at. 3. Do not say, “It will get done.” Say- I'll do it and follow up. 4 Be kind, not nice. Kindness is both intentional and meaningful. Acts of kindness require generosity, emotional and otherwise. And of course follow the rules.

Rules are part of every one's day from morning to night. Sometimes the rules make sense, but often rules may be confusing or both children and adults. Rules are valuable and are usually put in place because something occurred in the past which raised concerns for safety, understanding or even just general learning. Rules exist in all aspects of living-- from not running, only taking one cookie at a time, or even just sitting for a few minutes to stop and regroup or refocus one's activities. Rules set boundaries and parameters and they are put in place for keeping people safe and healthy. But we also know when it is all right to question the reasons for rules because as much as we would like for things to stay the same, they do not. And this is all right to do so that there is clear understanding of why.

During the time that God's people were travelling in the desert, God saw that the people were living in whatever they wanted. They did not follow the laws first given to the people who had lived as slaves in Egypt. So the time came when God called Moses up the mountain to give him the top ten rules by which the people were to live. These are outlined in Exodus 20. They were written on stones and Moses took them to the people. These commandments are still referred to as the core laws of many countries and are often on display in court houses and schools. These as the rules God set by which the people were to live and follow. But the people did not follow them; just like many people today who break these laws and rules. Yet the laws still exist for the safety and protection of others because the majority of the people do live within the parameters of these laws.

Jesus had been going in and out of the temple at Jerusalem and was teaching as he could. There were many rules for the people to follow about being in the temple- inner or outer court area; who could attend and what the pilgrimage of the faithful would involve. The temple was cared for and looked after by donations. But the money used to support the temple had no image of Caesar on the coins but was money used only for paying the temple tax of the faithful.

Outside the temple, there were many vendors who set up tables with anything from animals- cattle and sheep, birds-doves or whatever a family needed in order to make a sacrifice within the temple in homage to God's love and blessings. These vendors also used the money of the temple and often cheated the pilgrims out of their money and they pocketed much for themselves.

Jesus knew the rules-- that people needed to pay the temple tax with temple money but when he saw that the people were being taken advantage of, he did not like it. So instead of just saying to the vendors to stop cheating; or calling the police over what they were doing, Jesus grew angry. He was not known to grow angry-- he didn't turn into the Incredible Hulk or anything like this, but he was angry. He saw that the people were being taken advantage of and cheated. And so instead of being passive, we read that Jesus made a whip of cords, and drove them all out of the temple. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told the dove sellers- take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace.

Then the Jewish leaders asked, 'What sign can you show us for doing this? Jesus answered, Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up. But they said, that the temple was under construction for 46 years and you're going to raise in 3 days? They did not understand that he

was speaking about his body and foretelling his own death. IT wasn't until after he rose from death that the disciples remembered that he had said this.

Following the rules. IT is not always the most popular choice; but in order to keep integrity and transparency the rules and even changes to them need to be followed. This is why there are policies and rules put into place. IT is for fairness and equity for all people.

Jesus didn't just overturn the tables of the dove sellers- but everyone. And he did this more than once! At the beginning of his ministry according to our reading from John 2 and during the week of Passover towards the end of his ministry according to the narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The whole point of Jesus doing this was to emphasize that the temple was a house of prayer- where people could freely go and pray to God, not be judged in prayer but to pray freely and openly.

When Jesus enters the temple to flip tables, he is weeding the garden and clearing out what does not belong. HE is reclaiming the space meant for prayer and praise, healing and hope. It looks like chaos and anger but it is His devotion to God to make room for love.

When we think about our church sanctuary-- do you see it as a place of comfort, prayer, joy, hope - or what? In recent weeks there have been moments where we might wonder where the Spirit is amongst us. With changes that will come in a few months the church sanctuary is such- a place of prayer and there is no place for hurting others. We are living in a time when there is enough hurt, pain, and wonder in our world that we need a place of solace, a place where one may be free to laugh and to cry. This is a place where life's rules have been set by generations in the past and threats for today are not acceptable.

Jesus' actions in the temple helps us to look at the path we are walking on and what it means during this Lenten season. TO be grounded and growing is to let God do what needs to be done in us. It means inviting the Spirit to look at us and see what needs to be uprooted, cut back, and taught again about the rules of sharing together. There is also time required by everyone so that each of us can breathe a breath of fresh air and look to the spring as the beginning of something new.

Lent is a season of careful cultivation and the opening of one's heart. This is so that God's presence can be refreshed and made new in you. For you need to be strengthened for the journey ahead- as we continue in Lent and as we look to Holy Week and Good Friday. But you

must choose. You must follow the teachings of Jesus. And you must choose to rediscover the church as a place where we may experience God's glory, and to have hope renewed.

Jesus calls us to worship as a church family; to keep this place a holy place for prayer and to be the place where the Spirit may touch our hearts and change our lives- now and in the future. We must be willing to open our hearts and seek Christ to change us. For we are a part of this church family where God's teachings are taught and followed, where policies and teachings guide our actions and inactions. And it is a house for God's glory.

LET US PRAY

Holy God of grace, we praise you and thank you for your gifts to us- including rules and laws by which to live. Remind us that this is Your house- a house of prayer and a place where hope is found as we grow and change to become your faithful people. Hear our prayers O God. Amen