

Gospel lesson

Unlike in the other Gospels, in the Gospel of John, this story comes at the beginning of His ministry, just after Jesus called His disciples and then did His first miracle at the wedding in Cana.



picture from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebULXJa1pC4>; credit: LUMO

John 2:13-22 (NRSV)

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The word of God for the people of God

Interactive lesson



picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Space_Shuttle_Columbia_Launching.jpg

How many of you remember watching a space shuttle launch, either live or on TV? <Let them respond>

How big do you think those booster rockets are? <Let them respond>

According to <https://astrodigital.org/space/stshorse.html>, they are 8 ft 4½ in wide. Why do you think they are that precise width? <Let them respond>

They were made at a factory in Utah, then had to be shipped via train to the launch site. The railroad runs through a mountain tunnel, which only allows for a couple of feet of leeway on either side of the

railroad track. The rockets were made to fit the maximum permissible width that would fit through that tunnel. The tunnel width was based on the width of a standard railroad track, which is 4 ft 8½ in.

Do you know why that size track is the standard?

<Let them respond>

The standard track size in the US is a carryover from England, where people built trains to fit pre-railroad tramways. On what was the tramway size based? <Let them respond>

Tramways used the same wheel spacing as wagon wheels. Why were wagon wheels spaced that distance apart?

<Let them respond>

So they would not break in the old road ruts. Who made those old ruts? <Let them respond>

Romans built roads all across Europe standardized to that size for their war chariots. Why did they standardize to that size? <Let them respond>

Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back-ends of two war-horses. Thus, at the turn of the millennium, a major design feature of what was arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was ultimately determined by the width of a horse's read end.

Do you think a rocket scientist today would go into a farm field and measure livestock to come up with specifications for spacecraft? <Let them respond>

When we look at scripture, do we follow all of the customs described therein? <Let them respond>

Which ones do we follow? <Let them respond>

Why do we follow those ones? <Let them respond>

Although the mode of transportation has changed over the centuries, we have always needed to be able to transport things – and rather than start from scratch, we built on what others did before.

What are some changes that have been made over the centuries in the way we worship? <Let them respond>

What has remained important about our worship?

<Let them respond>

Much like the Romans set the chariot width standard that has lasted through the ages, God has given us standards of worship to follow. As we hear in our holy Scriptures, sometimes people get off track and need to be refocused on growing closer to God and treating one another well. We build on what humanity has experienced before and hopefully can achieve better conditions for everyone in doing so.

So the next time you see someone flipping tables or reminding you of a horse's rear end, take a moment to ask God about what is really going on so that you can deal with the situation through His wisdom and love.

<Hymn “Where Charity and Love Prevail”

UMH # 549>

Message: I Will Raise It Up



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/depths-of-love/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-i-will-raise-it-up/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Gracious corrector of our mistakes,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may rethink how You call us to live and
better build Your kingdom on this earth. Amen.

From the "Depths of Love," we think about Jesus
saying "I Will Raise It Up":

"This Third Sunday in Lent is an opportunity to
reflect on the individual and communal work we do
in worship."



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/green-crop-field-2687017/>;
credit: Dominika Roseclay

A number of years back, while returning from a long
day's work, my younger son got into a car accident.
He went off the road, breaking some small tree
branches along the way and ruining crops in the field

where the car finally stopped. All season the marks remained for passersby to see.

The next year, driving past that spot, you could not tell from a glance that there had ever been an accident there. The crops planted there grew well and the trees nearby were full of leaves. We could see that God had healed nature, raising up life where it had been torn down.



picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%A9r%C3%B4me,_Jean-L%C3%A9on_-_Moses_on_Mount_Sinai_Jean-L%C3%A9on_G%C3%A9r%C3%B4me_-_1895-1900.jpg, *Moses on Mount Sinai* by Jean-Léon Gérôme, cropped

In the Old Testament reading today, the Israelites had escaped from Egypt and were camped out at Mount Sinai. Their old way of life had been torn down, and now they had to learn a new way to live. So God gave them the Mosaic law, a way to respond in grace to the gift of being God's covenant people.

The ten commandments seem very basic to us in the US today. But back then? Well, laws typically are enacted in response to things people have done or are actively doing. God was raising society to a new level, a better way of living.

The psalmist asks, "Who can understand one's own errors?" Then, as now, people did not realize how they hurt one another. The crops grew the next year

after my son's accident, but we have no idea what ripple effects came from the initial damage done.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/cleansing-temple/>

Religious leaders had no idea how their working the system for profit was driving people away from God – and I do not just mean when Jesus visited the temple, but all through the ages – the sale of indulgences for Christians comes to mind too, not even considering all of the wars that political leaders have waged in the name of Christ.

Even with good intentions, such as teaching Native Americans about Jesus and saving them from their so-called savagery, cruelty has been done – I have talked before about the horrid boarding schools – and that kind of thing drives people away from God rather than inviting them into relationships of love.

So when Jesus was confronted with the price gouging and merchandizing of worship that was driving people away from God, of course He was furious. He took immediate steps to remove the block, to enable people to humbly seek God rather than be turned away or, perhaps worse, think they had bought righteousness.

Jesus raised the temple experience to a better level. God is to be accessible to all, no fees required.

The leaders in the temple thought He was acting like a horse's rear end, so they demanded a sign from Him to prove to them that He was justified in what He had done. And when Jesus told them what to look for, they did not understand it - much like many people today do not understand how God has called us to live.

Our material-focused world does not understand the cross. Too focused on self-interests, people do not see the better way to live, in the harmony of nurturing one another in love.

Paul pointed out in his letter to the Corinthians that both Jews and Gentiles struggled to understand it. They were too caught up in what they thought must be to open their hearts to what God enabled to be.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/depths-of-love/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-i-will-raise-it-up/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Yet even for all of our idiocy, when we finally trust and give ourselves over to God, God lifts us up. So what how do we respond in the here and now?

- † Always begin with prayer and listening to God. Remember, we do not know it all.
- † Repent of sins and seek atonement, to restore broken relationships. Learn about others, what they feel is important for repairing the rift.
- † Live as God calls us to, modeling Christian

community. Share the gifts God has given you.

- † Invite others into God's love - especially those who are struggling or estranged - invite them into our community, explaining the ways we live and why.
- † Share the Good News with your neighbors, those with whom you have built relationships and community.
- † And above all, worship God and give thanks for our freedom to no longer only live bound by sin.

<Invitation

UMH p.12>

Christ our Lord invites to His table

all who love Him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.

Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

<slide change>

<Confession and Pardon

UMH p.12>

Let us pray:

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray.

Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hear the good news:

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
that proves God's love toward us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
Glory to God. Amen.

<Doxology>

<Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>

Generous God, all we have comes from you and has been
given to us as stewards that we might live and love
as your beloved children.

As we bring our gifts this morning, we realize what a
small portion they are compared to what you have
given to us.

As we have sought ways to fund church ministry
without raising our level of sacrifice, forgive us.

If there have been times when we unconsciously
favored reaching those with more assets to give and
overlooked those who live and struggle with little,
forgive us.

Guide us in the path of repentance.

(above prayer from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>)

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:
 - Dawn LaVigne - medical issues, low blood cell counts
 - Becky Yacano - heart attack, going Mon catheterization
 - -
 - -
 - -
 - -
 - -
 - -
- Thanks for
 - -
 - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Family far off
 - Travelers
- Lord, please help all people who struggle, especially those to whom we remain oblivious.
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
 - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
 - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.

All these things we lift up in Your holy name, Amen.

<THE GREAT THANKSGIVING Communion - UNCOVER elements>

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

- † You brought all things into being and called them good.
- † From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life.
- † When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.
- † When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, you bore up the ark on the waters, saved Noah and his family, and made covenant with every living creature on earth.
- † When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people.
- † When your people forsook your covenant, your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights; and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.

<slide change>

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

† When you gave him to save us from our sin, your Spirit led him into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry.

† When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life, presented him alive to the apostles during forty days, and exalted him at your right hand.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter, you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts, that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

<hold hands out over bread/elements>

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

<hold hands out over juice/elements>

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,

<slide change>

we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

<hold hands out over elements>

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and juice.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each
other, and one in ministry to all the world, until
Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his
heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit
in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours,
almighty God, now and forever.

Amen.

And now, with the confidence of the children of God,
let us pray: *<Lord's Prayer>*

<Breaking of the bread and lifting of the cup>

<Serving of the elements; concurrent hymn

"Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" UMH #339>

<COVER remaining elements>

<Hymn "Praise the Source of Faith and Learning"

TFWS #2004>

<Benediction>



background picture from
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/depths-of-love/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-i-will-raise-it-up/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-graphics>

Beloved [siblings in faith],
may Jesus Christ go ahead of you this week,
turning over the tables that distract
and raising you up
to join in the abundant life of [~~the~~ our] Triune God
whose love binds us together
as the Body of Christ.

Amen.

<Benediction written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2023 and posted on
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/depths-of-love/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-i-will-raise-it-up/third-sunday-in-lent-year-b-liturgical-resources>>