

Trinity X

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[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight. O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Please be seated. Our prayer book was written with the intention to connect our prayers with the scripture lessons that we hear.

It was done this way because those who preceded us recognized that prayer and learning are intimately connected. The collect, epistles, and gospel text each Sunday and other holy days were put together to provide a kind of theme for that day of worship.

On some days, like today, it may be harder to see that connection. The gospel text is about Jesus weeping over unrepentant Jerusalem and cleansing the temple.

And our collect is about God hearing our prayers. It may seem disconnected, but there is a very deep concordance beneath the surface. In our collect today, we ask God to be open to our prayers.

[1 : 12] We ask him this because we know his disposition towards us. His property is always to have mercy, as our liturgy says. Not only did we ask God to hear our prayers, we asked him that he would answer them.

But there is an important section of the collect that needs to be understood. In order for our petitions to be answered, we have to be molded to pray about the sort of things that please God.

We are not trying to bend the will of God to do what we want. We are asking God to shape our wills so that we may do and pray about what God wants.

When Jesus is coming towards Jerusalem after his triumphal entry at Bethany, he weeps over the state of Jerusalem. He wished that they would know how to achieve the peace in their land.

But because of their sin and their rebellion against God, they are unable to know it. Our Lord then prophesies that others will come and surround those in the city and destroy it.

[2 : 21] After his proclamation, Jesus enters the temple and begins driving out those who are buying and selling it. My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of thieves.

And when he finishes driving them out, the scripture says, and he was teaching in the temple daily. In order for Christ to begin teaching the truth in the temple, he needs to make the temple a suitable place to learn.

When Jesus comes to us for the first time in holy baptism, he is encountering someone who is still in the kingdom of darkness. Sin is a disease that has affected all of us.

It has affected the whole world. When we were born, we entered a world that was ruled by Satan. And Jesus weeps over this. He does this because this was not how things were supposed to be.

But he does not just weep for us. Just as his weeping turned to action when he cleansed the temple, his weeping turned to action when he washed us in baptism.

[3 : 29] Through the power of the Holy Spirit. After we experience the exorcism of baptism, we are able to be taught by Jesus. His cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem is a foreshadow of when he cleanses his people through his crucifixion and resurrection, which is given to us through our baptism.

And if Christ is the true temple, and our bodies are also called temples of the Holy Spirit, our temples are being progressively molded to be like the true temple, who is Christ.

At his crucifixion, he cleansed his temple, his body, which is the church. And the water and blood that poured from his side consecrated the church to be a true temple of God.

All of us today are called to live and to worship in the true temple. Focusing on prayer as worship, Christ cleansed us and rid the powers of Satan, who traded and sold sin within our bodies, so that we may learn what it means to pray according to the will of God.

And if this is the case, why do we experience the hardships of life? If Christ truly cleansed us from the powers of Satan, sin, and death, shouldn't we expect life to be a bit easier?

[4 : 51] Shouldn't it be easier to pray? All of the things we experience in this life make it more difficult to pray. And sometimes it seems as if the power of Christ given to us in our baptism doesn't avail much.

Friends, it is true that we experience myriad trials and tribulations in this life. No one escapes the suffering in this world. But we can be comforted in knowing that when we are in the valley of the shadow of death, Christ is nearer to us than anyone else.

He is here in the trenches with us. He died so that we may live. Because of his presence in our lives, all of the hardships of life are utilized by Christ to form us as people who pray according to God's will.

Our lives are full of struggles, but those things are what shape us to pray about the things God desires for us to pray about. The vestiges of sin and death are still present, but the resurrection of Christ completely flips the tables over.

What used to be things that drag us down into darkness can now be things that shape us to be sacrificial people. At the end of the day, everything we experience can teach us how to pray.

[6 : 12] When we pray the Our Father today, let us think intentionally about the words, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

When we hear this, we have two choices. We can either yield our bodily sins to death, we can either yield our bodily temples to sin and to death, or we can yield our bodily temples to Christ by casting away the things that do not belong, just as Christ did in the Jerusalem temple.

When we yield our bodily temples to sin and death, we desecrate the true intentions that our temples were created for. But when we yield our bodily temples to Christ, we are becoming more like the true temple.

Let this be our prayer, even in our suffering. When we do this, our temples become like Christ's, sacrificial and holy unto God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.