

Lent 3: Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Baptismal Question

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: I will, with God's help.

Core Questions

How can we publicly acknowledge things done and left undone? What does Beloved Community look like in this place? What behaviors and commitments on our part will foster reconciliation, justice, and healing?

Collect

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Read the Scripture Together: *John 2:13-22*

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making 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. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 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.

Reflection

Jesus proclaimed in word and action that the dwelling place of God's dream of beloved community was not a place where religion was turned into a commodity, but a place of power in the service of life. God dwells in human bodies and human communities where love leads people to risk their lives because they trust in the power of resurrection to new life.

In the Labyrinth: Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Healing, reconciliation, and justice are big ideas, but they all begin with exploring our stories, shared history, and deepest longings. If you listened closely to your church and your neighbors and civic partners, what might you hear? What experiences have people had around race, ethnicity, and culture? Is there a shared vision of Beloved Community? What collective commitments and behaviors could you all make that would begin to foster Beloved Community?

Make It Real: Listening & Learning Session

Gather in groups of ideally no more than seven people each. Review the *Conversation Tips*:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share.

Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story.

Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

Ask each participant to tell a story using one of the prompts below. Allow at most two minutes for each story, with a little silence but no discussion between each. Each group should designate a timekeeper who will gently but clearly indicate when each speaker has 30 seconds left, then 10 seconds, and when time is up.

Story Prompts for Group Sharing:

1. When I walk around this neighborhood/town/city/community, I feel ...
2. When I look at our neighborhood/town/city/community, I dream of ...
3. To me, Beloved Community looks like ...
4. I was especially aware of my race when I ...
5. I was saddened about race in our neighborhood/town/city/community when ...
6. I was grateful for race in our neighborhood/town/city/community when ...
7. To foster Beloved Community, I hope to ...

Offer everyone the opportunity to share a story. If there is time, go a second round and invite each person to choose a different prompt. Leave 10 minutes to discuss the following questions:

- What surprised you? Did someone's story change the way you view a situation or idea?
- What stories and perspectives do you wish you could hear? How can you humbly invite those voices to the listening & learning process?

Closing Prayer

You may name hopes for deeper relationship with neighbors who differ from the gathered group. You may also acknowledge the dreams each person has shared, and how they resonate with God's dream of healing and wholeness for the whole creation.