

MARCH 4, 2018



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT



EXODUS 20:1-17

OR 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17

PSALM 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-25

JOHN 2:13-25

REFLECTION

Growing up, my dad had a lot of rules, especially about his tools. It's been years since my father died but I can still hear him yelling, "Jeffrey, what did you do with the pliers? How many times do I have to tell you to put my tools back in their proper place?" On one occasion I yelled back, "I didn't take your pliers!" My dad yelled even louder, "Why don't you ever put my tools back where they belong?" A few minutes later he found the pliers and realized he had not put them back in their proper place. To my complete surprise, my father came and apologized for yelling at me. My jaw dropped as I realized my father could admit he was wrong and apologize to me. In that incident, I realized my father really loved me. He had never apologized to me before.

The readings this Sunday seem to be about rules and anger but, like the story about my father, are really all about a love relationship. In the First Reading, God gives Moses his ten rules and says that he is a jealous God who will inflict punishment for wickedness. Look closely at the beginning of the passage: God reminds the Israelites that he heard their cries for help and brought them out of slavery. The Ten Commandments do not begin with rules, but begin with a reminder of God's love for God's people. The commandments are God's way of helping the Israelites maintain their relationship. And maybe God gets angry when we fall out of that loving relationship. If you accept the above argument, then Jesus' anger in the Temple makes sense. When Jesus made a whip and drove the money changers out of the Temple, he is really expressing his anger about people who mess up their loving relationship with God. They forgot about this relationship and focused on money instead. When Jesus says, "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace," he really means "Don't forget about God's loving relationship with you."

ACTION

The biggest challenge in this Third Week of Lent is to either continue the practice you started on Ash Wednesday or start a new practice. No matter what action you take, the most important thing to remember from today's readings is to connect your Lenten action to growing your love relationship with God. This is the key to a good Lenten practice.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- What Lenten action are you committed to doing? How can this Lenten practice connect you more deeply to God's love?