

3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT / OCULI SUNDAY 03/04/18

*Mt. Calvary, West View / Pentecost, Avella*

EXODUS 20: 1-17, 1 CORINTHIANS 1: 18-31, JOHN 2: 13-25

Theme: Respect My Authority

**+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +**

Our Text is taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew, the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter:

***The Jews then said to him, "What sign do you to show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"***

If you know anything about South Park ó no, not the park south of here in Bethel Park; I am referring to the irreverent, quite mature, animation television show on comedy central, South Park<sup>^</sup> , and if you know anything about this show you know there is a boy named Cartman who prides himself on being the smartest, the most manly, the leader of this group of four, and the big joke is, he is none of these. However, in his delusional state, he believes he is the tough guy, and he believes himself to be the authority on many matters ó none of which he truly has a firm grasp on. There is an episode, however, where a very bad thing occurs ó in a desperate attempt to have more police presence to catch a perpetrator, they make Cartman a deputy. Donning his mirrored sunglasses, his pr-24, and taking off on his plastic big wheel transport, he is ready to play cops, South Park Colorado style. As he beats the offenders into submission, his catch phrase, complete with thick southern drawl, is, "Respect My Authorit-ah!"

Here in our text, Jesus is about to go "Southern Law Enforcement" on the temple offenders. He has come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Upon entering the temple courts, he observes the vile scene, one we need not rehash, but suffice to say, it was not pretty. The problem is that there is worship going on, but who can concentrate with all that noise going on! It would be like

turning the choir section into the kitchen, and it is bad enough for us all to be concentrating on the Reformation worship with the smells of that wonderful Hoover Bounty wafting up the staircases: Bratwurst and sauerkraut; pretzels and potatoes; Spaetzle and pickles and you know the Lutheran beverage of choice they have ó great black coffee! Now imagine if that all takes place right over there! You can see it, you can hear it, and since there is no restraints on your seat except in the back three pews where we lock in the real trouble makers, you can even go over and taste it. Very much a huge distraction and that is putting it very mildly. And yet, still not as disruptive as the scene our Lord is observing! Here He took the time to make a whip of cords, possibly taken from those holding His tunic, and slashing and whipping, drives out the offenders with their husbandry; he overturns the money-changers tables mixing all that foreign currency with the temple. Not an easy job mind you ó much like trying to separate those Canadian coins from proper US coinage in your coin jar. Very difficult and time consuming. To the pigeon sellers He speaks, **“Take these things away; do NOT make My Father’s house a house of trade.”** Some have speculated that Jesus was more compassionate to these sellers because He Himself had to pay the temple tax with such barter, but I am inclined to think He speaks thus because they were packing up already. After all, if you see a guy driving out the oxen and overturning tables, you waiting around to see what He will do to you?

The kicker to all this is the accusation of the Jews, **“What sign do you show us for doing these things?”** I thought He was pretty clear. He said this was His Father’s house, so Jesus being the Son of God would have the authority to clean house as it were. After all, my mom made be clean the house; I tell Liam to clean the house. Would not then the Son of God be allowed to clean His own house? Ah, yes, the Jews do not believe Jesus to be such, and therefore, since they

perceive themselves to be the highest level of "God-on-Earth", much as the Pope sees himself this day and age, they ask God to prove Himself to be authoritative with a sign or a wonder.

Now, such as Cartman, Jesus *could* beat them with those cords and tell them to "Respect My authority," but that is not why He came. He did not come here to beat us into submission. He did not come here to clean house just at the temple. He came to clean *everybody's* house from *every* unclean sin. He came, as He said, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" You want to see the awesome power of God? You want to see Him display the awesome authority He indeed has? Then destroy this temple, put it high on the cross, and He will **still** raise it up. In the past He showed His authority is saving His people from the yoke of slavery in Egypt under the heavy hand of Pharaoh. He showed the authority in the first three plagues that at first everybody had to endure. Then when the next three plagues came, only the people of Israel were spared. Then the Authority of God was tested in the plague of hail, that all who believed His Word, whether Jew or Gentile, would be spared from the downfall of fatal ice. This proved that the Authority of God is a blessing to both Jews and Greeks, male and female, that all who believe and trust in His Word, will be saved. The Word in our Old Testament lesson is well known to His people, in that we all know the Ten Commandments quite well. We also know all too well, that we do not follow them one bit as well as we should. So, Jesus shows us His salvation authority in that when we destroy this temple of His body, He will rise it up in three days so that you will know that YOU are forgiven.

Yes, it is the theology of the Cross that you are saved, not the theology of God's anger and might. If we had to earn a salvation away from God's wrath it would never be done. Yet, with the Cross, there is forgiveness for your sins and in the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, you have the peace that surpasses all understanding. No other religion is based as such. You want to know

the difference between Christianity and all other religions? Just ask if their God died to save them from their sins and give them everlasting life by faith alone. This alone proves that the god of the Hindu, the Muslim, the atheist, the Jehovah Witness, the Mormon, yes, every other god is NOT the God of salvation and truth, only Christ, the second person of the Triune God. And salvation is found only in the Cross of Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world.

For the Word of the cross is folly to those that are perishing. The Jews scoffed at Jesus saying it took 46 years to build a temple, but that is because they had no respect for Jesus' authority over sin, death, hell and the grave. Indeed, He will rise again in three days from being taken down from the cross. Yes, it is foolish to man that salvation can come so easily to you with simple faith and Word of salvation, yet God uses the foolish to shame the wise. There is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ and Him crucified. So, we preach Christ Crucified, alone the source of wisdom and our righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

This is the message today to share with all. So I encourage you the same as Paul, boast not in your own authority, but boast in the Lord. In His most Holy Name. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING  
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN+

Offering / Prayers

**There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment**