

**John 2:13-25 (Third Sunday in Lent—Series B)**  
**“Remember and Believe”**  
**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT**  
**March 7, 2021**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel lesson recorded in John 2:

<sup>13</sup>And the Passover of the Jews drew near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves and the money-changers sitting there, <sup>15</sup>and upon making a sort of whip from cords, He threw them all out from the temple with the sheep and the oxen, and He scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables, <sup>16</sup>and to those who were selling doves He said, “Take these things away from here. Do not make my Father’s house a house a marketplace.” <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it is written, “Zeal for your house will devour me.” <sup>18</sup>Therefore, the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do you show us that you have the right to do these things?” <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” <sup>20</sup>Therefore the Jews said, “This temple has been forty-six years in the making, and **you** will raise it up in three days?” <sup>21</sup>But He was speaking concerning the sanctuary of His body. <sup>22</sup>When, therefore, He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He has said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus spoke. <sup>23</sup>Now while Jesus was in Jerusalem among the festival crowd during the Passover, many believed in His name upon seeing the signs which He was doing. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus Himself did not entrust Himself to them because He knew them all, <sup>25</sup>and because He had no need that anyone should give witness concerning people, for He Himself knew what was in people.

One of my favorite prayers is the Collect for the Word. Let me pray it now with you.

“Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

In this prayer, we ask God concerning His inspired and inerrant Word contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments. Our petition is that the Lord would give us the grace and blessing to **hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest** the Scriptures. The result of this is that we would embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life that is ours solely through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our Lord. You have to admit, this is

good stuff! It's an all-encompassing exposure to the Divine Word of God with our ears and eyes and mind. And I love the phrase "inwardly digest the Scriptures." It means that God's Word in the Old and New Testaments becomes a part of you. The Word is heard and read so that you internalize it and memorize it. Literally, you eat it up!

But I'm not sure that we're at all particularly good at this. Memorization of anything these days has pretty much gone out the window. Students in school really aren't taught to memorize and make information a part of themselves with maybe the exception of the multiplication table. People don't really have to have things in their heads anymore because you can simply "Google it" and there is the information on your screen. Now it's certainly okay to use your resources. But it is still faster to know it. It's still better when the facts, the topic, and the understanding are truly a part of you, so much so that you could easily teach it and explain it to another.

How much more so should this be for Christians with the very Word of God that He has entrusted to us in the Scriptures! His Word to us is meant to be an integral part of us. And this isn't about memorizing chapter and verse so you can be the first person to look it up in Sunday School or Bible Class. It's about reading and hearing and putting the Word into you so that it is a part of you, inwardly digested, so that you can return to the Word time and time again even when there is no Bible available to you. But we are sometimes lax and lazy. We don't always take the time with the Scriptures that we should. And oh, how we have the excuses about why we can't . . . too busy, too tired, other things more important to occupy our minds and lives like video games and movies. As Jesus asked His disciples in Gethsemane, "Could you not watch with me for one hour?" We often respond, "I don't even have five minutes for you, Lord."

When you forget about the Scriptures, when you ignore the Word of God, you are forgetting and ignoring Jesus Himself who is the heart and center of that Word. You turn a cold shoulder to the very Son of God who took upon Himself human flesh and blood in order to rescue you from everlasting death. For the Scriptures are all about Jesus, from Genesis to Revelation. It's all about His cross and resurrection for the salvation of God's fallen, sinful humanity. God asked His ancient people through Ezekiel, "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord Yahweh, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" (Ezek. 18:23). Paul speaks the Word of the Lord in 1 Timothy 2, assuring us that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:4–6 ESV).

To read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures is to receive the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus. We see this in John, chapter 2. The clearing of the temple is connected with the cross, with the death of Jesus, and His resurrection. What is it that the disciples remembered? The Scripture! "Zeal for your house will devour me." This is Psalm 69:9a. And John explicitly tells us that "this house," this "sanctuary" that would be destroyed, which would be raised in three days, was the "sanctuary" of Jesus' own body. And Jesus was indeed "devoured" because of His zeal for God's house. The Jewish authorities "destroyed" His body as He was nailed to the cross. Jesus' body, beaten and bloodied, hung there in the cosmic darkness of Good Friday, bearing the sins of the world. And on the third day—joy of all joys—Jesus is risen from the dead. Sin, Satan, and Death lie defeated in the grave. There is forgiveness and eternal life for those who believe by grace through faith in Christ.

And what do the disciples remember after all this had taken place and Jesus was raised? The Scripture! The Word about Christ! The Word of Christ that He had spoken. There could be no doubt as to the end result of the conflict. Jesus would suffer in His body, be crucified, and die. And on the third day, He would be raised again. This is the Word that the disciples remembered. "Zeal for your house will consume me." "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Scripture stands fulfilled. God the Father has given us the promised Seed of the woman who has trampled the head of that ancient snake, the devil. The Descendant of Abraham has come with blessing for all the families of the earth. The Son of David according to the flesh lives and reigns, having purchased and won forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all people with His suffering, death, and glorious resurrection.

The disciples remembered the Scriptures and the words of Jesus and they believed. According to His promise, Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and He causes you to remember. In John 14:26 Jesus promised, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." It is as if Jesus had said, "He will teach you that it is My Word and doctrine. He will apply Himself to this and recall it to your mind, that you may understand and judge that it is My Word, the very words which I spoke to you. He will emphasize it and make it clearer from day to day, so that you will know Me ever better and see how through Me you are delivered from sin and death."<sup>1</sup> And this God the Spirit does for you. He connects and reconnects you to the Scriptures, whose very heart, center, and meaning is Christ Crucified and Risen for the forgiveness of sins.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 24: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 24 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 175.

Rabbi Slostowski, a professor of the Talmud in the rabbinical seminary at Tel Aviv, hated the Lord Jesus Christ. So great was his resentment that he sharply criticized a young Jewish convert reading a Hebrew New Testament. The young man replied by giving him the copy. That night the rabbi, alone in his room, stayed up until three in the morning reading about the Nazarene who claimed to be the Messiah. The Holy Spirit guided him into all truth. He inwardly digested the Scriptures about Jesus. Later he confessed, "I have already found more than 200 passages of the New Testament that prove beyond a doubt that Jesus is truly the Messiah."

By the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, continue to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures. Receive from its pages Jesus Christ—Crucified and Risen. Remember the Scripture and the Word of Christ that give you forgiveness and everlasting life as God's Word becomes a part of you. Internalize that Word and memorize it. Eat it up! Amen.