

Jesus very first sermon are in these words from the Gospel today, hear this good news. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent,

I believe

they have just opened. They descended on Jesus like a dove, and this is the message that he has for those who would listen, and this is the very same message that we still have today. Good News of Jesus Christ that shares of God's love is it's the same as it was then and will continue to be the same for years ahead.

Yeah,

there's a lot of ways to tell the story of God's good news in this. We hear Jesus speaking them. We have the opportunity to ourselves to share by our words, by our actions, and sometimes by what we choose not to do. Another way that we hear the stories of the scripture, especially in a place like this, are in the stories that are told in the stained glass.

OK?

The stained glass has been here for decades and it has told the story of the Gospel, proclaimed it without using words to people that are seated just where you had been seeing

needed for years and years.

You may know that the very earliest stained glass, a alabaster was, was used in the fourth century. They found some records is as the light would come through it and, and very thin sheet would give an appearance of colored glass color, get glass through the years has been used in Christian churches as early as the seventh century and it really reached its peak as an art form in the Middle Ages. You might picture, uh, what you have seen pictures of, or maybe you've been there yourself, to cathedrals in Europe and the stories that are told and the stained glass,

OK,

especially at that time, many people were unable to read. And so when they came into a place of worship, they saw the pictures and they knew the stories and they told the story again and again.

And so during our series, over the next several weeks, we're going to take a closer look. At this stained glass that's here in this place, maybe some images that you're familiar with, maybe some that you're not so familiar with, and we're going to take a look and see where are they in scripture, how do they connect, uh, with our lives today, and how might they help us live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Now we're going to take him just portion by portion. We're going to say these ones that you all probably know the most. We're going to look at them, uh, by Easter and we're going to move through the different areas. Um, and we're going to take a closer look. So today we're going to start in a place that maybe you may not have taken a look up here on the west, on the balcony level starting at the back and going to the front so you don't have to crane your neck will have them on the screen here in just a minute.

So if you want to go look at them yourself, I know you can your way up there. If you want to move around or the sermon, you're welcome to do so well. So I have them on the screen, we'll start with a flaming sword. Think we've got a picture of a flaming sword is a flaming sword that is, that is in the back. It's on the Virginia or the far northwest as you're headed up the stairs. Maybe if you've headed up the balcony, you've seen that flaming sword. Now what is a flaming sword at doing and our stained glass tradition that tells us that the place that we see this in scripture is in genesis. You remember the story that God has created, all things God has called them and good, and yet we see, um, here in Genesis Chapter Three, verses 22 through 24, the Lord God said, the human being has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil now. So he doesn't stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever. Gracious. I hope that stops. It might be my microphone. I apologize for that. If it does, I'll move to the black here in just a minute, but we'll see how it goes. All right, verse 23, the Lord God sent him out.

Yeah,

to farm the fertile land, which he, from what she was taken, he drove out the human to the east of the garden of Eden. He station winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.

So this is the passage of scripture in which we see this a sore that's used after people have chosen to disobey God, to eat from the tree that uh, God has specifically given them instructions not to eat from. And so this flaming sword is, is part of the story of our sanctuary. It's a reminder that we are a invited and called, um, to follow after God's words for us that the instruction and the guidance that we receive from God both in the scriptures and through the words of other people in a variety of ways, that these things are important and that there are consequences when we choose to turn away from God. If you move one pain up just inside the sanctuary, um, you'll see, uh, tablets. You are probably familiar with these and you may recognize them as the 10 commandments. The tablets are used to symbolize teaching. Um, oftentimes they are engraved as you see here with numbers or with letters, and when you see them represented in that way, um, they represent the 10 commandments and they at times also represent the Jewish faith, um, as opposed to, uh, the church and the teachings of Jesus.

We, we hear these words that you remember of course in exodus chapter 20 verses one through 17, then God spoke all these words, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the House of slavery. You must have no other gods before me. Do you not make an auto for yourself, no form whatsoever of anything in the sky above or on the earth, below or the water's under the earth. Do not bow down to them or worship them because I the Lord your God am a passionate God. I punish children for their parents sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. Do not use the Lord your gods name as if it were of no significance. The Lord won't forgive anyone who uses his name that way.

Remember the Sabbath Day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it, not you, your sons or daughters. You're male or female servants, your animals or the immigrant who's living with you because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that's in them and six days but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and made it holy honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the Lord your God is giving you. Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely against your neighbor. Do not desire

your neighbor's house. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife, male or female servant ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

These words we find in the Old Testament of course are central to the faith of the Jewish people and yet they also have key guidance for us today. These 10 commandments are ones that we would also seek to follow after that guidance from God that teach us how to live, how to respond to God, the first several, or how we respond to God and connect with God and the others on how we connect with one another. Perhaps the division between the two tablets and then of course a few chapters later. You hear these words in exodus chapter 24. The Lord said to Moses, come up to me on the mountain and wait there, I'll give you the stone tablets with the instructions and the commandments that I've written in order to teach them. So these two tablets remind us of the Ten Commandments. This teaching that God offers to Moses there on the mountain that Moses shares with the people of Israel. And then we also might use to guide our lives today, the tablets remind us of teaching both specifically at those 10 commandments and also that there's a variety of ways that we received guidance from God that we might live our lives according. Both the teachings that we find in the scriptures, those that we hear and see. Jesus

the tablets are a reminder of these things. And a tell that story in the stained glass. The next, as we move up on the west side is a picture of wheat. Wheat is located balcony level on the west side. Uh, it's between the tablets and just before the temple and it stands represents most often. I'm holy communion. We'd of course is a ground into a flour which is used to make bread traditionally, uh, that, uh, the bread that's using communion, it's most often made of wheat and wheat is a reminder that where we find our sustenance, of course, we find that in the meal that Christ offers his disciples. When we received the bread and the cup, at times they are connected with a grapes or a with a, with a cup that represents both the elements, the bread and the cup and holy communion in this case, um, they are by themselves. At other times in Christian art, you'll see wheat as a part of the Nativity scene, as a part of Jesus birth. Sometimes you'll see a sheaf of wheat as a reminder of what's to come in the story. Of course that's not represented here we see these grains of wheat and they also remind us of this passage from John Chapter six verse 35. Jesus says this, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. The weed is a reminder about where we find a sustenance for our bodies and our souls. Of course, the wheat itself, a literal wheat we still use today is very important in this state and this region of the country. But it's a reminder too that Jesus is the bread of life and that when we connect with God, when we seek to follow after Jesus, we can find a sustenance for our souls. The last portion on the west side, if some of you sitting on this side, you may be able to see it here. It's a picture of the temple. And the temple is a, has a variety of meanings in a couple different places. We're going to take a look at several of those, um, but perhaps at the heart of it, it's a reminder that this is the place where God dwells.

This is the place where God lives. We hear it referred to, of course, in the Old Testament, there were two temples that were built. You may remember the temple that Solomon built. It was torn down and destroyed, and later it was built again. The Second Temple was rebuilt and that was the temple that was there during the time of the gospels. When we see Jesus himself going to the temples. But the very first instructions we see are in first kings chapter six, verses one through three. It says this, and the 400 and eighty eight here, after the Israelites left Egypt in the month of Ziv, the second month in the fourth year of Solomon's ruled over Israel, he built the Lord's Temple, the temple that King Solomon built for the Lord. Dose Ninety feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. The porch in front of the temples main hall was 30 feet long. It ran across the whole width of the temple and extended 15, three feet in front of the temple.

If you're familiar with that passage, you remember that there's a, goes on quite a lengthy portion of describing up. Here's what the temple should look like and, and here's the pieces that need to go in it. And, and part of this portion of scripture reminds us that, um, that it matters how we worship. It makes a difference on how we come and offer ourselves. Now, we don't clearly, uh, correspond exactly to those physical dimensions by the think. Part of what it's teaching us today is that God cared for the temple. This place where the Israelites gathered for worship and God cares that we gather for worship and how we come is a part of our offering to God. We see, of course several key passages in which Jesus himself interacts in the temple. One of those from Luke chapter two, beginning at verse 46, after three days, they found him.

This is Jesus in the temple. This is when he's 12 years old. You remember he's come to celebrate the Passover. He was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and putting questions to them. Everyone who heard him was amazed by his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were shocked. His mother said, child, why have you treated us like this? Listen, your father and I have been worried. We'd been looking for you. Jesus replied, why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my father's house, but they didn't understand what he said to them. Jesus there in the temple says, don't you understand that it's necessary for me to be in my father's house, and so when Jesus is making this claim, when he's 12 years old, he's reminding us that this is the place where God lives, that, that he is the son of the person who lives there.

It's making a claim about who he is and reminding us that, that Jesus is the son of God. And so we, when we see the temple, it's a reminder of that story as well. And then of course, you remember the story, uh, from John Chapter Two verses 13 through 16. It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found this is when he's much older and started this ministry. He found that the temple, those who are selling cattle, sheep and doves, as well as those involved in exchanging currency, sitting there, he made a whip from ropes and chase them all out of the temple, including the cattle and the sheep. He scattered the coins and overturned the tables of those who exchange currency. He said to the dove sellers, get these things out of here, don't make my father's house a place of business.

And again, Jesus is reminding us that he is God's son, that God is his father, and that when we gather for worship, there's a place of importance and how we treat it makes a difference. And finally, of course, uh, the temple as a reminder. It's a picture of, of what's to come. And revelation 21, verse 22. This is a picture that John has of the new heaven and the new earth. And of course the picture of the temple of reminds us of what won't be there. I didn't see a temple in the city because it's temple is the Lord God Almighty. And the lamb, the city doesn't need the sun or the moon to shine on it because God's glory is its light and its lamp is the lamb. So when we see a picture of the temple, the reminds us that in the future, when God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, there won't be a need for physical place together for worship.

There won't be a temple that set aside for the presence of God because God himself, Jesus will be with us and Jesus will be the temple. So when you see a picture of the temple, it's a reminder that that God dwells with us, that we have the opportunity to follow after God and that at the end of time there won't be a physical place together because God will be in all and through all this good news that Jesus proclaimed after his baptism is this same. Good news has continued through g through the generations. It's the store part of the stories that are told and these stained glass windows and it's part of the good news that we have the opportunity to share with others, so live as part of God's kingdom. Tell these stories. Remember the flaming sword and the tablets and the wheat and the temple and know that they represent God's love for us and that we might go out and share God's love with others. Will you pray

with me? God, we give you thanks for the stories that you tell in stained glass in the scriptures. The stories that you continue to tell in our lives, we ask that you would strengthen us to tell your story to all that we meet by our words, by our actions that others might see your presence and experienced your love in us. In Jesus name we pray,

Amen.