

BMC Lectio in lieu of Sermon, August 15th, 2021

Text: Mark (parallels found in Matthew 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:14ff)

Led by: Zac Klassen

Good morning. We have already begun to enter yet another story from the Gospels that illustrates how the God of the Bible is a God of justice, challenging and calling those who follow God to pursue justice in their lives and in their communities. The story of Jesus turning the tables in the temple is well-known and perhaps one of the more stark images of the range of Jesus' emotions: from gentle and full of compassion to here, in this instance, filled with righteous anger at the injustice he was witnessing. There is a lot going on in this passage and bible scholars and commentators have much to say about it. Maybe, if we have time later, we can get into some of those historical and theological discussions. For right now, however, we are going to do something different than the usual sermon format. Rather than deliver a sermon today, I am going to lead us in an ancient spiritual practice called *Lectio Divina* or, translated from the Latin, "Sacred Reading."

Now what is the practice of *lectio divina*? Many of you may already be familiar with it, but I will give us a refresher, nonetheless. In the Christian tradition, *lectio divina* is an approach to reading scripture that is unhurried and attentive, focusing more on what God is saying to us right now in this moment through this text rather than on picking apart the text for information about God or about the time in which a bible passage was written. To put it another way, *Lectio Divina* is not just about intellectually analyzing the scripture passages but rather about listening to them with the heart and inviting God to speak to you through them. Ideally, of course, we would always listen to scripture with our heart as well as our head, but it is not always easy to do so and this practice gives us one tool for practicing this listening. Now, as a father of three busy boys, I also want to say to any of the households where things are not so unhurried or quiet this morning, that that's ok too. Hearing God in scripture can and does happen in busier spaces too, so don't put pressure on yourselves this morning to have everything quiet and calm.

There are many different approaches to the practice of *lectio divina*, but often the approaches follow a three- or four-part pattern:

1. First, we are invited to *read* (*lectio*) or listen to the passage read slowly and to do so with an attitude of expectation that what we are about to hear is a word for us.

In this first part, I will read the passage aloud for us and I will take me time, allowing us space to enter this passage. Here we are invited to read or listen as if we were reading a letter from someone close to us—we are paying close attention. As I read you can follow along with the reading on the screen or just listen. After reading, I will wait about 30 seconds before moving on to the second part.

2. In the second stage of *lectio divina*, we are invited to meditate (*meditatio*) on the words. Mediating here should be understood in the sense of "chewing," or "muttering," or "speaking" the words that we have initially heard. Maybe it means chewing on the whole passage. Or maybe it means chewing on just one word or phrase that stood out to you. Here we join Joshua and the Psalmist in our desire to "meditate day and night" (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2) on the Word.

In this second part, I will again read the passage aloud slowly. This time, I will give us more like a minute to a minute and a half after finishing reading to allow us to "chew" on these words. Maybe here, with

your mic muted, you will want to audibly speak a word or phrase from the passage aloud a few times. If you prefer to have your screen off during that time that is fine too.

3. Finally, in the third stage of *lectio divina*, we are invited to speak (*oratio*) or respond to God. This speech can come in any form: maybe it is a prayer of thanksgiving; maybe it is a cry for help; maybe it is a question to God?; or perhaps it is a word of anger and frustration, a pleading with God. In prayer we are invited to bring our authentic selves to God, not who we think we should be.¹

In this third part, I will read the passage for the third and last time. This time I will give us about a minute and a half to two minutes, again mic muted, to speak to God in response to what you have heard. If you prefer to write down your prayer instead that is fine too. Once enough time has passed for this third stage, I will invite anyone who wishes to share something from what they have heard during this time to do so. If you would prefer not to at that time or if you would rather do so after the service, I am willing to host a second hour time.

After some sharing, I will then end with a prayer and we will then transition to the remainder of the service.

¹ As Eugene Peterson puts it in his *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer*, "We must pray who we actually are, not who we think we should be." (100)