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The Rev. Garrett Lane (03/03/2024, The Third Sunday in Lent)

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

Amen.

My sermon is titled the Ten Commandments and why you're doing them wrong.

It's not.

It's spoiler.

No, we're going to start somewhere else in a different desert.

I saw a dune this weekend and dune part two, Frank Herbert's novel set to screen.

Yeah, I'm going to talk about dune.

It's this big, operatic space fantasy and I got to go see it because I would talk about

it so much that my wife was like, you need to go see it, the weekend it opens.

Yeah, it's got love, love in it, struggle, power, issues of identity.

It's set in a war and there are space worms which we're not going to get into here but

it's fun.

Check it out.

I don't need to expand on that.

And if you've only seen David Lynch's 1984 dune, which Robert has told me he loves

very much, yeah, thumbs up.

It's good, but you should also see the new ones.

For this reason, the main character who is Paul Atreides, he's played by Timothy Chalamet.

You might know him as Wanka if you have young children.

I think that's coming out actually.  
You might not have seen that.  
But Timothy Chalamet plays Paul Atreides and Paul Atreides is this young man.  
He's a warrior.  
He's an answer to a prophecy.  
He's a leader.  
He's seeking vengeance for his murdered family members.  
He's got all of the good things that we love in it.  
We put up the dune, actually, yeah.  
But he finds himself on a planet that looks like this called arakis.  
And there's a lot going on on arakis, basically the way that they're able to get from planet to planet is from this mineral that they harvest on this planet.  
And Paul is a part of this group called the Fremen.  
And the Fremen are fighting this evil kind of overbearing overlords called the Harkinins who killed Paul's family.  
And so it's this whole thing, the brutal Harkinins, Paul's fighting everyone.  
And he joins the Fremen, and it's like dances with wolves, right?  
From 1990 with Kevin Costner becomes one of the Fremen.  
And it's a really good, it's a good movie in a lot of ways.  
But it's in space.  
It's not set on the frontier.  
Paul Atreides, though, is this character who has dreams.  
He has dreams about the future.  
And he, for much of the movie, resists going to a specific location on the planet because he knows if he goes there, if he goes to this place, and if he kind of like steps forward to fulfill his destiny, he's going to get a lot of power.  
And he's afraid of what will happen to him when he gets that power.  
And he actually even says that there's this part of him that's inside of him that once he gets there, he knows that he's opened something like a little box in himself that can't be put back in there.  
He knows that he'll change, and he won't change for good, but for ill.  
And so much of this movie is him battling kind of with this, resisting this thing inside of him, that he knows exists, but he doesn't kind of want to let out of the box.  
And I don't know about you, but kind of this idea that we have things in ourselves that we can't control, that are, I know that you know this.  
There are things outside of us that we can't control.  
We can't control the prices of our homes, how much our rent is sometimes, the stock market.  
We can't control those things, but we often tell ourselves that we can at least control

maybe what's going on in my own heart.  
At least I can kind of control what's going on in my own head.  
Or at least we tell ourselves that we can do that.  
We tell ourselves that we can do that.  
Because I am constantly fooling myself.  
I am constantly telling my own self  
that I have control over everything that I do,  
and I'm fooling myself into this place  
where I think that I can assert control  
and fix all the things that's wrong with me,  
and I can make myself into something better.  
Have any of you, just by nodding,  
you don't have to look at anyone else, just look at me.  
Just nod, yes, have you been there?  
Are the bad thoughts with us now in the room?  
How's that going though?  
How's that going for you guys, like fixing yourselves?  
Yeah, probably not great,  
because it doesn't go great for me.  
But the words from our prayer today  
from our opening collect,  
which is just another word for prayer.  
We have these prayers that we say at the beginning of worship,  
and our opening prayer, our opening collect,  
is on the screen with the very end kind of taken off.  
But I want to read it for you.  
Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves  
to help ourselves,  
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,  
and inwardly in our souls,  
that we may be defended from all adversaries,  
adversities which may happen to the body,  
and from all evil thoughts,  
which may assault and hurt the soul.  
No power to help,  
yeah, no power to help ourselves from ourselves,  
is a curious way to start things,  
to say that out loud.  
It's not something,  
I don't feel like I hear this often in my life  
that I don't have any power to help myself,  
but it is a true thing, and we heard it today.  
And it leads us to Jesus clearing the temple,  
this passage that shows up in Lent,  
which is an odd passage.  
It's an odd gospel reading to have for a number of reasons.  
And I really like this painting,  
this icon that we have of Jesus clearing the temple,  
mainly because you can see the coins that are falling,  
the tables are getting overturned,

the money changers,  
and the people in charge of the animals are leaving.  
And if you'll notice, there's one animal,  
there's a golden calf that's also being kind of  
led out of the temple, which I think is a pretty cool  
call back to Exodus and what we were reading.  
But I'll just paint this picture again for you,  
because it was a bit of a reading.  
Jesus enters into the temple,  
the place where people go to worship.  
It's in Jerusalem, it's on this high mountain.  
And you might be wondering,  
why are there people even in there  
that are changing money?  
Why are there people in there with animals?  
At this time, we think of worship  
as kind of like what we're doing right now.  
We come together, we partake in the bread and the wine,  
we sing our hymns, we praise God, we worship together.  
At this time, worship though,  
we have a bit of a sacrifice element to our,  
if you listen to the words of our Eucharistic prayers,  
you can hear that.  
But at this time, people would be going to the temple  
and you'd be buying an animal  
and you'd be sacrificing it in the temple.  
And if you travel from far away,  
it doesn't make sense really to carry that animal  
with you the entire way,  
so you can buy your animal there.  
But if you have money that has Caesar's face on it,  
Caesar who claims to be a God,  
who is, for many people in the Roman Empire,  
a God to be worshiped, that's not gonna fly  
if you're in a temple that says there are no gods,  
but this one God.  
And so that's why the money changers are there.  
And yes, we mark up these bulls and these goats  
at a price because that's what we do, right?  
So Jesus gets mad, he makes a whip of cords.  
It says, he throws people out,  
he hurts, hurting livestock is hard.  
So he's like doing this all in this temple,  
he's hurting these livestock,  
he's getting these people, he's angry.  
And when questioned, he says that this temple  
is not the temple you think it is.  
The temple is himself.  
Instead of going to the temple to meet God,  
one has to meet Christ to meet God.

And it begs, we kind of asked the question,  
what kind of Jesus is this?  
A couple months ago, we were hearing and singing hymns  
about how meek and mild this little baby is  
and here we have him taking time to make a whip.  
That's a lot of thought.  
You have a lot of time to count to 10,  
to scream and do a pillow, to do all the things  
you're supposed to do, but he's weaving a whip  
to then hit people with and to hit animals with.  
What kind of Jesus is this?  
I think about this in kind of two ways.  
First Corinthians 6 calls us,  
Paul uses this language of kind of thinking  
of our own bodies as a temple  
and not just something you might see on your Instagram feed  
for like yoga classes, your body's a temple,  
and I love yoga, don't give me a wrong,  
but it's not something like that,  
but that something, if the temples are a place of sacrifice  
and where you meet God, treating that temple  
with the utmost kind of respect  
and proper thoughts is what you want to do.  
But he's doing something bigger.  
He's saying the worship of God happens through Christ,  
not through a temple that's built with human hands.  
Christ who is our temple, where we meet God  
and we meet humanity.  
Humanity and God come together in one person in Jesus Christ.  
So that's one thing that's kind of going on.  
I think the other thing that's happening for us  
and for us in Lent, in this penitential season  
where we are slowing down to remind ourselves  
that we don't have power to help ourselves.  
Here's the other thing it says.  
Christ does something in us that doesn't always  
just make us feel good.  
If anything, facing things in our lives  
like how we can't help ourselves  
makes me at least feel very weak.  
We need someone to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
as we hear in our Eucharistic prayers  
from the call for purity, which we don't read in Lent.  
But I want to take you back to the collect of the day.  
No power of ourselves to help ourselves.  
I think it's helpful to hear that out loud,  
to hear the reality that we actually live in,  
that we need help.  
And Lent brings us to this place time and time again.  
We cannot help ourselves.

We cannot fill the holes that we dig.  
We cannot go back in time to fix the things  
that we want to fix, that we lay in,  
awake at night thinking about.  
We need some kind of cleansing,  
some kind of cleansing of this temple of God  
that resides in our own hearts,  
that our lives do get cluttered up  
with all sorts of things in these temples,  
all thoughts and desires that keep us from loving God  
and from loving our neighbors.  
We need help in prayer.  
We need help making our needs known to those around us.  
And we just need help.  
God sees that we don't have this power to help ourselves.  
And Christ with this whip of cords  
is not exactly the most encouraging image in my mind.  
He's out to get you, do good.  
He's coming after you with a whip.  
That's not what you're gonna really hear preached.  
And that's not what I'm preaching here.  
Christ with a whip of cords though,  
I think of it as driving out the things  
that are inside myself that I can't get out by myself, right?  
These, and I want some of that.  
I want some of that Jesus,  
driving those things out of my heart.  
Driving out my inflated ego that gets me into needless arguments.  
Driving out our feelings of self-hatred  
of disgust for ourselves.  
Driving out the thoughts of our hearts  
that want others to fail so that we can move up.  
Driving out thoughts that lead us to shout and scream  
an unjustified anger that tell us  
that we're better than others,  
that lead us to have that main character syndrome  
time and time again.  
Lent is recognizing that we have no power in ourselves  
to cleanse ourselves.  
It strips us of that illusion to power.  
It shows us that we need a protector.  
We need a savior.  
Not just for our bodies, as our prayer said,  
but for the thoughts of our heart  
that bubble up frequently.  
One of my favorite bands is this Scottish rock group  
called Frightened Rabbit.  
Maybe you've heard of them before.  
I really like them.  
I have a song that was released in 2012 called The Woodpile.

And it's this song that's really this big rock song.  
It's swelling.  
You can like, you play it in the car,  
and you can turn it up and have a good time.  
It's energetic.  
But the lyrics have a very different tone.  
The lyrics have, they're about how helpless we all are.  
I'm going to read you a little bit of the lyrics right now.  
I'm trapped in a collapsing building.  
Come find me now where I hide,  
and we'll speak in our secret tongues.  
So come and talk to me in the way that only you could talk to me,  
the person that's helping him.  
So will you come back to my corner?  
I've spent too long alone tonight.  
Would you come bright in my corner?  
Be a torch to light this woodpile.  
Scott Hutchinson, who is the lead singer in the front man  
for, was, he died tragically a couple years ago.  
But he said in an interview that he loves this song  
because it's big, confident in its music,  
but it's helpless in its lyrics.  
The woodpile is about that night  
when you feel utterly out of place, alone,  
awkward, and cornered.  
All any of us want in those instances  
is for someone we care about to come and take away,  
take us away from it all.  
The one that Hutchinson needs is a lit flame  
to cast out the darkness.  
Christ does what we cannot do.  
He drives out the things that we can't drive out ourselves.  
He comes to us in our helplessness and he saves us.  
He overturns our hearts and our minds like those tables  
that we might be able to look at the world  
with clear eyes, with honesty, even just for a moment.  
We have no power to help ourselves, bruises our egos,  
but it lets us look at ourselves in truth.  
Thanks be to God that we are able to meet Christ  
who cleanses us, that we are able to meet him in bread  
and in wine together, to meet the one who makes us new,  
to meet the one who restores our cracked and broken world.  
Amen. Thanks be to God.