November 22, 2019

Scripture

**Luke 19:45-48**

Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things, saying to them, "It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."

And every day he was teaching in the temple area. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people, meanwhile, were seeking to put him to death, but they could find no way to accomplish their purpose because all the people were hanging on his words.

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**Our Scripture Reflection**

For those pious Jews who had to travel for days to make the annual pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem for the celebration of the great feast of Passover, the trip was a burden. They were expected to bring an animal for sacrifice as part of their obligation and that proved to be a burden for those people of means who brought along large, uncooperative animals such as bulls or oxen. To ease their burden a market system had emerged in the area next to the Temple where merchants made available for purchase by the pilgrims, animals of just the right specification. They were available, that is, at an inflated price. To buy such animals, the image-bearing coinage possessed by the pilgrims had to be exchanged for the coins which were acceptable to the Temple treasurer. The exchange rate was weighed heavily against the pilgrim. So Jesus said, "Enough!" Only that which honored His Heavenly Father was to take place in His House. Needless to say, the thieves were not happy, and that would cost Jesus dearly. To cleanse the Temple it would ultimately cost Jesus His blood. And so it is when one goes against the status quo.

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**Food for your Journey**
The symbol of blood with its specific quality of cleansing appears throughout the Bible, from the earliest books to the latest. ...
I suggest a simple experiment if you truly wish to grasp the function of blood as a cleansing agent. Find a blood pressure test kit and wrap the cuff around your upper arm. When it is in position, have a friend pump it up to about 200 mm of mercury, a sufficient pressure to stop the flow of blood in your arm. Initially your arm will feel an uncomfortable tightness beneath the cuff. Now comes the revealing part of the experiment: Perform any easy task with your cuffed arm. Merely flex your fingers and make a fist about 10 times in succession, or cut paper with scissors or drive a nail into wood with a hammer. The first few movements will seem quite normal as the muscles obediently contract and relax. Then you will feel a slight weakness. Almost without warning a hot flash of pain will strike, after maybe 10 movements. Your muscles will cramp. If you force yourself to continue the simple task, you will likely cry out in absolute agony. Finally, you cannot will yourself to continue; the pain overwhelms you.
When you release the tourniquet and air escapes from the cuff, blood will rush into your aching arm and a wonderful sense of relief will soothe your muscles. The pain is worth enduring just to experience that acute relief. Your muscles move freely, the pain vanishes and life feels good again. Physiologically, you have just experienced the cleansing power of blood. While the blood supply to your arm was shut off, you forced your muscles to keep working. As they converted oxygen into energy, they produced certain waste products (metabolites) that are normally flushed away instantly in the bloodstream. Due to the constricted blood flow, however, these metabolites accumulated in your cells. They were not "cleansed" by the swirling stream of blood, and therefore in a few minutes you felt the agony of retained toxins.
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While the blood supply to your arm was shut off, you forced your muscles to keep working. As they converted oxygen into energy, they produced certain waste products (metabolites) that are normally flushed away instantly in the bloodstream. Due to the constricted blood flow, however, these metabolites accumulated in your cells. They were not “cleansed” by the swirling stream of blood, and therefore in a few minutes you felt the agony of retained toxins.
In blood we have the perfect analog to reveal the process of sin and forgiveness with startling clarity. Forgiveness cleanses the wasteful products, sins, that impede true health, just as blood cleanses harmful metabolites.

A Prayer from the Heart
Dear Jesus, You gave everything, every drop of Your Precious Blood for the sins of those whom You love. Help me to show my gratitude for Your gift by living my life in imitation of You, despite the cost of doing so. Amen