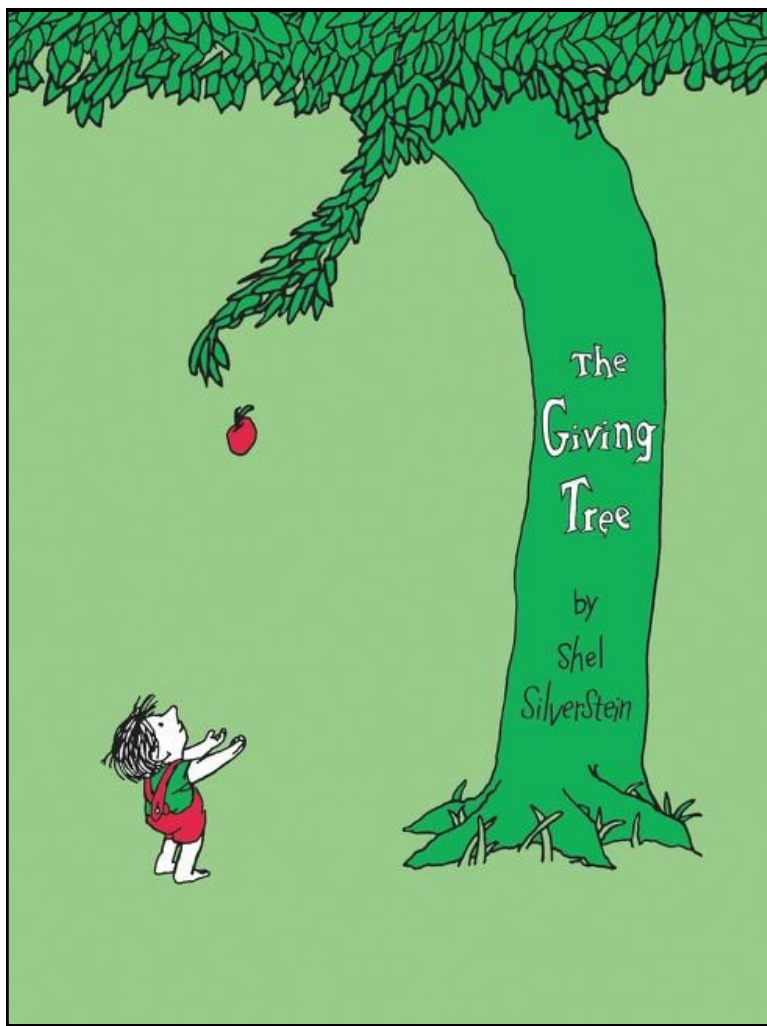


# Living Grace

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT  
CYCLE B

"BECOMING THE MEETING PLACE OF GOD"



*The Giving Tree* begins, "Once there was a tree...and she loved a little boy." So begins a story of unforgettable perception, beautifully written and illustrated by the gifted and versatile Shel Silverstein. Every day the boy would come to the tree to eat her apples, swing from her branches, or slide down her trunk...and the tree was happy. But as the boy grew older he began to want more from the tree, and the tree gave and gave and gave. This is a tender story, touched with sadness, aglow with consolation. Shel Silverstein has created a moving parable for readers of all ages that offers an affecting interpretation of the gift of giving and a serene acceptance of another's capacity to love in return.

# Art & Faith

EXPLORING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION  
OF SACRED ART



*CHRIST DRIVING THE MONEY CHANGERS FROM THE TEMPLE*

*Oil painting by Rembrandt ~ 1626*

*Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts ~ Moscow, Russia*

## EXPLORING THE ART:

The Dutch artists of Rembrandt's day gained respect painting landscapes, still lifes, and scenes glorifying ordinary life, but these subjects never held much interest for Rembrandt, who was captivated by the moving Bible stories his mother used to read to him. Some of his contemporaries painted from the Bible, but not with the same passion as Rembrandt, who remains famous for capturing the characters' emotions and involving his viewers in the stories. Rembrandt's Biblical artwork captured grand, dramatic scenes focusing on the action of the story, but he did not create pieces with large numbers of extras. He would choose a limited number of characters and capture their intense emotions at a key moment.

Rembrandt created over 300 works of art inspired by stories from the Bible. Most of these works are drawings and etchings, and there are some 60 paintings. Biblical themes of his artwork include stories from Genesis, especially about the patriarchs; unique individuals from the Old Testament - Simson, Ruth, Saul, and David; tales from the Old Testament - Esther, Daniel, Judith, and Tobit; Jesus' birth and childhood; Jesus preaching; and the Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

## CAPTURING INTENSE EMOTION

# Living Grace

READ-ALoud STORY



*"Abide in Me" by Vicki Shuck, Esperanza*

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.*

*~ John 7:7-9*

Read aloud video link:

[THE GIVING TREE](#)

Written & Illustrated by Shel Silverstein

# Sunday Gospel

JOHN 2:13-22

Since the Passover of the Jews was near,  
Jesus went up to Jerusalem.  
He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves,  
as well as the money-changers seated there.  
He made a whip out of cords  
and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen,  
and spilled the coins of the money-changers  
and overturned their tables,  
and to those who sold doves he said,  
"Take these out of here,  
and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."  
His disciples recalled the words of Scripture,  
*Zeal for your house will consume me.*  
At this the Jews answered and said to him,  
"What sign can you show us for doing this?"  
Jesus answered and said to them,  
"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."  
The Jews said,  
"This temple has been under construction for forty-six years,  
and you will raise it up in three days?"  
But he was speaking about the temple of his Body.  
Therefore, when he was raised from the dead,  
his disciples remembered that he had said this,  
and they came to believe the Scripture  
and the word Jesus had spoken.

# Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

LIKE JESUS, NEW LIFE BREAKS OUT THROUGH US.

Through the story of *The Giving Tree* we learn that something can have the same essence and nature, yet take on many different forms, serving many different functions. This story holds a helpful parallel as to what Jesus taught regarding the Temple. When Jesus arrived at the Temple that day he came upon a busy marketplace at the entrance. The Jewish Temple was a magnificent building set on the highest hill in Jerusalem. The Temple was built over the rock/altar upon which Abraham offered his only son Isaac as his sacrifice to God. Abraham demonstrated to God his great faith and love.

In the time of Jesus, animals were sold so people could buy them for offerings in the temple. The priests would sacrifice the offerings for the atonement of their sins. With the sacrifice of Jesus, the sacrificial system came to an end. He is the fulfillment. Thus, there is no longer a need for a temple. This is what Jesus is foreshadowing to the crowd. He is the temple; he is the place of sacrifice. Jesus goes on in his ministry to tell us that we are the temple of God. Through our baptism we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We become the place where God dwells. The presence of God, once believed to be just in the "Holy of Holies" now lives within us.

It is not the church building where the Holy Spirit dwells. It is in the Christian Community gathered, and in the heart of the believer, there is the "temple", the meeting place of God. It is so important for us to gather as community. The Christian community gathered becomes the place for one to meet and experience God in strength and witness. In *The Giving Tree* the boy meets the tree and experiences the nature and generosity of the tree in many different forms. In the same way through out Salvation History there have been many different forms in which to experience the same God. We are privileged to live in a time when we can know God in the intimate way that we do. It's only through the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus that we can do so. When we open our eyes to realize we are now the house of God, our whole lives proclaim the Goodness of God.

As *The Giving Tree* illustrates, our lives like Jesus' life, can be consumed for others. As one surrenders their lives for others, as one serves and sacrifices for other's lives and well-being, like the tree and Jesus, our lives give life to others. The temple and the tree change forms, and God's life and love now can grow and grow and grow, everywhere. Like a seed from a tree, new life begins, and like love once released, it grows and grows and grows.

# Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

**YOUR STORY:** What do you like about trees? What do trees do for us? What do trees provide for us? What do you enjoy about our church? What does it provide for us? What do your parents do for you? What do your parents provide for you?

**THE CHILDRENS' STORY:** What different forms does the tree in the story take? What did the tree give to the boy? What did the boy do with the gifts that the tree gave him?

**THE GOSPEL STORY:** Jesus calls the temple "his Father's house" - what do you think that means? What if our church burned down? Would we still be a church? If being the people of God together makes us a church, where does God live, in the church building or in us?

How are we called to give away the life and love of God that lives in us? How might the life of God in us provide for others? How does God's life continue to grow outward but through different forms? What are some examples? How does *The Giving Tree* show us the way?

# Biblical Background

JOHN 2:13-22

**GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING:** In Jerusalem, at the market at the base of the steps that lead to the Temple Mount. This area is the location of the Western Wall of modern time in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount area was the center of sacrificial offerings in Jesus' day. Today the Dome of the Rock is built on top of the site where the Jewish Temple used to stand. This "rock" is part of the stone altar upon which Abraham offered his son Isaac to the Lord. This same rock became the location of the Holy of Holies where the Jewish priests offered sacrifices to God for the sins the people.

**TERMS:** *Moneychangers* Jesus comes upon the marketplace where the moneychangers would change people's money so they could buy animals for the priests to sacrifice. You could not buy an animal with money that contained a "graven image" on it. Remember the challenge of Jesus – "give to Caesar what is Caesars" – that is money with the image of Caesar on it. Money such as that had to be exchanged for the "imageless" coin based money of Israel. Jesus comes upon the moneychangers that are upping the prices and taking advantage of people coming with good intentions to make sacrifice. The sheep and oxen that were driven out would have been available for purchase and used as a sacrificial offering in the temple.

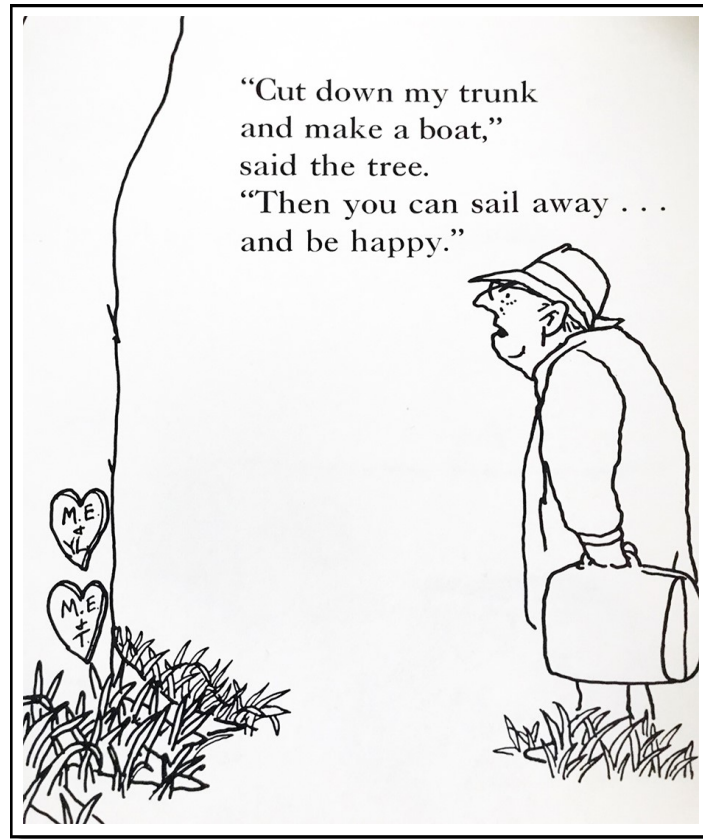
*Temple* The temple was an enormous and elaborate building where the Jewish people would come to offer sacrifice. This was the Passover thus, crowds were coming to Jerusalem to purchase an animal to be sacrificed and then consumed in a family setting. The High Priest was the only one who could go into the Holy of Holies to offer the sacrifice for atonement. This is the 2nd temple that took 46 years to build. This Temple, begun in 10 BC, was finished in the lifetime of Jesus.

**CULTURAL INSIGHT:** The scandalous thing to the listeners at this scene is when Jesus says, "stop making my Father's house a marketplace". This would be a religious shock to the listener. The idea of God as the Father of Jesus is a radical new way to see God. This is a claim to divinity. Jesus is saying he is the Son of God. This statement, more than any other, motivated the temple authorities to plot his death. He is announcing that he is the Messiah, and the Temple in Jerusalem is his Father's house. Jesus is challenging the leaders looking for the authority to kill him.

**INSIGHT INTO MEANING:** Jesus is teaching about the core realities of Christianity. His body is going to be sacrificed like the animals used in temple sacrificial rites. Yet unlike the animals, he will rise and conquer death, forever. With his death and resurrection, God's presence and glory will also rise. God cannot be killed or broken, is the message that Jesus comes to bring, and that God is for all people. The covenant was established with the faith and willingness of Abraham to offer his only beloved son, Isaac as an altar sacrifice. God sends his own son, Jesus, to be the final and perfect sacrifice. Jesus is the new temple within which God dwells, and we (when the Holy Spirit dwells within us as believers) become the new meeting place of God. Can you imagine what we could do as a church if we took this reality seriously! This is how significant this message is, thus Jesus is expressing strong emotion. This story is in all four gospels which speaks to the fact that this gesture and revelation of Jesus is very significant.

# Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME  
AND IN THE WORLD



**QUESTION OF THE WEEK:** When we give of ourselves how do we grow with others and grow in God? How is life “raised up”?

**CHARACTER QUALITIES:** SACRIFICIAL GIVING  
GOD DWELLS WITHIN

**FAMILY ACTIVITIES:** Look up all the kinds of products that we make with trees and how they contribute to our world. What activities and tasks are possible because of trees? Think about the gifts of God that reside within each member of your family. What kind of “house of God” can you build together as a family that will be useful to the life of the world? How, through your family, might people “meet God”?