



የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖትና ሥርዓት

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Third Sunday of Zemene Tsom (*The Season of Lent*)

Liturgical Readings:

Col. 2:16 – end; James 2: 14-end; Acts 10: 1 -9

Psalm 69:9-10;

John 2:12—end

The Anaphora of Our Lord

The Zeal for the House of God

“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me” (Psalm 68:9–10).

Beloved in Christ, grace and peace be with you from our Lord Jesus Christ. Today, the Psalmist draws us into a reflection upon a divine intensity, a holy fervour that consumes the soul when the honour of God is undermined and the sacred is profaned. These verses invite us to consider not only the zeal for the House of God but the profound responsibility of those who dwell within His presence to defend the holiness of worship and the purity of devotion.

In the Old Testament, we find that the worship of God was structured around two related but distinct institutions: the Synagogue and the Temple. The Synagogue served as a house of teaching, prayer, and study, a local gathering where God’s people learned His law and encouraged one another in righteousness. The Temple, however, was the dwelling place of the Almighty in Jerusalem, the holy sanctuary where sacrifices were offered and God’s majesty was made manifest. While the Synagogue nurtured the mind and the heart, the Temple demanded reverence, awe, and a zeal befitting the presence of the Most High. It is into this Temple that our Lord Jesus Christ would enter, moved by righteous indignation at the corruption that had taken hold.

The Gospels bear witness to His zeal. As John recounts, Jesus entered the Temple in Jerusalem and found merchants and money changers conducting trade within its sacred precincts. With authority both terrifying and righteous, He overturned their tables and drove them out, saying, “Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise” (John 2:16–17). In this act, He reveals a principle that echoes the Psalmist’s words: the zeal for God’s house is a consuming fire, a call to defend His holiness even when it confronts human complacency or profit. The reproaches that had been directed against God—the dishonour, the exploitation, the trivialisation of sacred space—fell upon Him, for He bore the indignity of those who would profane the divine.

Yet the zeal of Christ was not confined to outrage alone. It was a zeal inseparable from His mission of proclamation and liberation. After His ministry began in Galilee and Nazareth, on the Sabbath He went to the Temple and rose to read. The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He proclaimed, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). As He returned the scroll and sat, all eyes were fixed upon Him, and the people marvelled at His words. He declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21). The manifestation of God’s Spirit, the anointing for mercy, justice, and salvation, was now embodied in His very presence. Those who had known only law, ritual, and humanised worship were confronted by the living fulfilment of the Word, the Temple of God now walking among them in flesh and Spirit.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see the continuation of this zeal in the life of Cornelius, a devout man “fearful of God with all his house” (Acts 10:2). His prayer and reverence prepared the way for divine visitation, demonstrating that God honours those who cultivate holiness and piety, whether within the Temple or beyond it. The reproaches of the unfaithful are met with mercy and the revelation of His will when hearts are rightly disposed. Similarly, the Epistle to the Colossians warns us that human traditions, regulations, and superficial observances cannot substitute for the true life in Christ, reminding us that our devotion must be inward, sincere, and animated by the Spirit, rather than mere external compliance (Colossians 2:16–23).

The Epistle of James calls us further: faith without works is dead (James 2:14–26). The zeal that Christ displayed in the Temple is not only a zeal of indignation but of active love—faith made visible in action, defending the honour of God, ministering to the afflicted, and challenging injustice. True reverence for God moves the believer to intervene when His house is dishonoured, whether through greed, hypocrisy, or neglect.

In the Temple, Christ’s words carried another profound layer: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). He spoke of His body, of the ultimate act by which the profanation and sin of the world would be confronted, cleansed, and transformed. The zeal for God’s house, then, is inseparable from the redemption of humanity itself. Christ’s righteous indignation foreshadowed His resurrection, the restoration of all that is holy, and the vindication of those who seek God with pure hearts.

Beloved, the Psalmist’s cry—“the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up”—finds its fullest expression in our Lord. We are called to emulate this holy fervour, to defend the sanctity of God’s dwelling in our lives, in our communities, and in the worship of the Church. The reproaches of the world, the scorn of the irreverent, the temptations of human gain, are ours to bear when we honour the Lord’s house. Yet, as we act in zeal, let it be animated not by anger alone, but by love and by the Spirit that anointed Christ for His ministry. Our faith must be active, our devotion tangible, our worship sincere, and our lives a living temple in which the Lord may dwell.

May the Lord grant us such zeal, consuming and sanctifying, that we may walk in righteousness, uphold the honour of His house, and proclaim the gospel with courage, mercy, and unwavering devotion, until the day when we behold Him, the true Temple, in the fulness of His glory. Amen.

Glory to God!