

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

John 2:13–22

Intro: Years ago, there was all kinds of buzz about a young pastor who taught on the Day of Atonement

-in a groundbreaking sermon, he brought a man dressed as a high priest onto stage and a live goat and talked about the slaughtering of this goat the entire time. People raved about it  
-now, urban legend has it this inspired a bunch of young preachers to emulate him. People all around the country were bringing live goats to the pulpit, but they didn't have the budget or foresight and some of these animals do what animals do...live...onstage...during the preaching of God's Word.

You can imagine how this might distract, crowd out, obstruct the preaching of God's Word.

Now in our section of Scripture today, Jesus comes to the holiest place of worship and there he finds obstruction by a bunch of animals and money. In his interaction we'll see the lengths God will go to do away with our false worship and make the way to be with him.

### **One or Two Temple Cleansings?**

-I believe two temple cleanings favors the most natural reading of the text. John situates the geography and amount of time that has passed before moving onto Jerusalem in **John 2:12**

-Only in John do we have Jesus' words that are later used at his trial for blasphemy. **Mark 14:58; John 2:19**

-Some people argue this is a theological placement in John rather than chronological.

-There are times where the Gospels present material theologically rather than chronologically.

-Matthew 4 vs Luke 4. Temptation order, but given John 2:12, it seems that John is telling us this cleansing took place in the early days of Jesus' ministry

Take-home: Read the Bible carefully in context and you can understand it!

### **The Temple is Defiled (v13-14)**

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

John 2:13-14

Jesus has just spent a few days in Capernaum with his mother, brothers, and disciples and now he is on the journey to Jerusalem.

Geographically, Jerusalem is south of Capernaum, but people always went UP to Jerusalem. It's at a higher elevation, but more than that, it's the place where the temple is and Passover is going on. It's the high time of the year. Every able man had to go for a number of festivals, Passover being one of them.

Jesus travels and finally arrives at the outer court of the Gentiles and there are animals taking up all the space.

-oxen, sheep, and pigeons

-people are changing money because you had to use specific coins in the Temple—all the smells and extra stuff goes along with livestock would be present

And this brings Jesus into holy anger. He's going to make a whip and drive it all out, but before we talk about Jesus disinfecting we need to ask what these people were doing wrong?

**What's the Problem?**

1. It's **where** they're doing it (outer court of the Gentiles)

-people were commanded to get animals for the sacrifices, so that's not in itself wrong

-but they were taking up the area where a Gentile God-fearer would be able to worship God.

-they were crowding the holy place that belonged to God and was meant to be extended out in mission to others with business affairs, the necessities of life

2. It's **how** they're doing it

-these moneychangers were making money off of people's transactions for worship

-there are some stories of who would be able to determine what an unblemished animal was and this likely led to being able to control market prices

3. It's what they're **not** doing

But more than those two things, which are both wrong, it's the overarching truth that Zeal for God's name does not consume these people.

They aren't worshipping God. They aren't coming into a holy reverential encounter with the God of the universe who rescued their ancestors out of the land of Egypt. The most important aspect of the Temple was this is where Jews came to worship God.

What's so important about the temple?

"But the most important function of the temple was to house the ark of the covenant, the golden box that contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, along with Aaron's staff and a jar of manna. The most important part of the ark was the mercy seat. This was where the blood of the Day of Atonement sacrifice was spread so that sinful humans could dwell in God's presence. This was why the Israelites came to the temple for Passover. Every family was to sacrifice a lamb for their sins. They came to the temple because that was where the sacrifices were made by the priests and received by God." -Richard D. Phillips

And Jesus, the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the WORLD, steps into the Gentile courts of the temple and it's crowded with animals and trade.

Things that are never to be put in the place of God are there

The way in which God commands his people to worship him is not being observed

The holiest place on planet earth dedicated to the worship of God is defiled.

And Jesus acts in righteousness.

## The Temple gets Disinfected (v15-17)

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."  
John 2:15-17

### 1. This is Jesus

- we are accustomed in our culture of "the God I know, the Jesus I believe in would never..."
- here, in Holy Scripture, Jesus the Son of God makes a cord of whips and drives out the sellers of livestock. Have you ever heard the crack of a whip?
- he pours their money out and flips over tables- have you heard the clang of coins
- he tells the sellers of the pigeons, "Get these out of here. Don't make my Father's house a house of trade."

### 2. Jesus cares about pure worship

I can imagine what the people might think as they saw Jesus do this

- you'll scare away big donors
- you're going to lose numbers of worshipers
- you might come off as angry and narrow-minded, Jesus.

But as his disciples reflected on this later, they applied the words of Psalm 69, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Jesus is more concerned with true worship of the Father than he is pleasing the world.

And so let's get really practical: Jesus still goes after whatever our hearts worship or however we worship wrongly to rescue us from idols that cannot save and make us true worshipers.

### Questions

What crowds your heart as you come to worship God on a Sunday morning? (if only my kids were more obedient, if only my spouse would stop, if only God would give me)

What have you brought into the house of worship that doesn't belong? What are you not willing to part with?

How have you made this house a house of trade?

Is our worship about, for, and to God? Or is it about the songs I like, the way a sermon makes me feel, the ideas about God that are appealing to me, and the parts of the Bible I want

Jesus drives out with a whip those things which rob God of glory. And I know how it sounds, but look at what Jesus has just done:

He has driven out all the other sacrifices. There is no sacrifice that remains in this area to buy. He has gloriously stripped them of their ability to purchase their own sacrifice. The time is drawing near where Christ himself will put an end to all the ways the temple has fallen short.

A cloud of dust went up as Jesus cracked a whip and what remains is him alone as sacrifice.

-you may feel like God is ruining your life, taking away the things you need, when what he is actually doing is clearing away all the things you've clung to and leaving you with himself.

The process can be scary, but here we see "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

## **The Temple will be Destroyed (v18-21)**

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

John 2:18-21

The Jews don't debate that what Jesus is doing is wrong, but they ask for proof that he has the right to do it. Show us a sign!

And Jesus answers them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews in confusion and probably not a little derision replied, "It's taken 46 years to build this and you'll raise it up in three days?"

The temple was the place they met with God. It was the very presence of God. They had rebuilt the temple after being carried off into exile and now Jesus is saying that he'll be able to rebuild this temple that took 46 years to build in three days?

But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

John 2:21

Jesus will give himself in self-sacrificial, wrath-absorbing, sin-removing love for sinners.

But why does he speak of this in terms of the temple?

"Because the crucifixion of Jesus was the climatic visitation of the covenant curses and God's just wrath against sin. Israel's prophets had warned of the visitation of the curses of the covenant, and the ultimate manifestation of those curses was the destruction of the temple and exile from the land, to be followed by a faithful remnant back from exile into the land. Little wonder that the Lamb of God who would bring to pass that prophesied new exodus should expel other sacrificial animals from the temple precincts. Little wonder that the disciples of Jesus would see him resurrected and believe both what he said and *the Scripture* (2:22). God kept his promises through the death and resurrection of Jesus, who is the new and better Passover Lamb accomplishing a new and better exodus, after a more devastating destruction of the temple and a more impressive rebuilding of it on the third day, in his resurrection."

-James Hamilton Jr.

Friends, have you come to this temple? There is no other temple. We go continually in the confession of sin to Jesus, our high priest, the Lamb of God, the one who is our temple and we receive freely the grace of his forgiveness and presence.

Won't you come?

## **The Temple is Delivered (v22)**

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

John 2:22

1. The cross and resurrection is the way to be assured of God's love

-I love that the sign Jesus gave them wasn't something only for them, but the way that we can all be assured of God's love.  
-what do you tell people about to assure them of God's love? If it's anything but the cross of Jesus Christ and his Resurrection from the dead, at best, you're only ever giving them the 2nd best thing you could give them.  
-in this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and give his Son as a propitiation for our sins!  
-also, this clearly puts the Resurrection as the evidence by which Christ did or didn't accomplish

## 2. The Scriptures are to be believed and trusted

-how do we know the way to be made right with God? Holy Scripture tells us!

## 3. Be patient with those to whom we minister

-we have the Good News and others must know!  
-be encouraged, though, if you're losing heart.  
-it took the disciples a while to remember. Parents, youth leaders, teachers, friends, be encouraged that the words you speak are not in vain!  
ex. John Flavel with Luke Short 85 years later  
-your labor in the Lord is not in vain!

Live in the freedom of having Jesus as our all.

"In a sermon Dick Lucas once preached, he recounted an imaginary conversation between an early Christian and her neighbor in Rome.

"Ah," the neighbor says. "I hear you are religious! Great! Religion is a good thing. Where is your temple or holy place?"

"We don't have a temple," replies the Christian. "Jesus is our temple."

"No temple? But where do your priests work and do their ritual?"

"We don't have priests to mediate the presence of God," replies the Christian. "Jesus is our priest."

"No priests? But where do you offer your sacrifices to acquire the favor of your God?"

"We don't need a sacrifice," replies the Christian. "Jesus is our sacrifice."

"What kind of religion is this?" sputters the pagan neighbor.

And the answer is, it's no kind of religion at all."

—Tim Keller, King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus, p. 48.