

Theme: Jesus has Zeal for God's House

- I. He cleanses the temple
- II. He fulfills the temple

To have “zeal” for something means to have a strong interest in and love for something. Jesus always had a great zeal for the temple in Jerusalem. For example, when Jesus was a 12 year-old boy his parents went up to Jerusalem and they lost Jesus. They looked for him for three days and finally found him, sitting in the Temple courts listening to the teachers and asking them questions about God's Word. In our passage for today Jesus is no longer 12, he's about thirty years old, but he has that same zeal for God's house. He had such a zeal for God's house that drove out those who were turning his Father's house into a market. Jesus actually did this twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of his ministry. You'll notice that this is John chapter 2, so this is at the beginning of Jesus ministry. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus drove out the moneychangers and those selling sheep and oxen. He would do the same thing again at the end of his ministry at the beginning of holy week about a week before he was crucified. Jesus had such zeal for God's house that 2 times he drove all the moneychangers and those selling sheep and cattle out of the temple. Today we will see that Jesus has zeal for God's house. I. He cleanses the temple and II. He fulfills the temple.

Our Gospel begins: **“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money” (John 2:13).** It was Passover and at Passover every Jewish male was required to come to Jerusalem and offer a sacrifice at the Temple: either a bull a sheep or a dove. Well, at Passover, the Jews came to the temple from all over the world. If you were coming from hundreds of miles away it would be difficult if not impossible to bring cattle or sheep with you and so most people bought the sacrifices when they arrived in Jerusalem. Now Jesus has no problem with people buying the sacrifices once they got to Jerusalem. The problem was that people were selling cattle and sheep and doves right in the temple courts. They didn't have to sell the sheep and the cattle and the doves in the temple courts, they could have done that anywhere else in the city. Of course, the vendors probably wanted to set up in the most convenient spot for their customers and the most convenient spot for their customers was right there in the temple courts. The problem was that the temple was supposed to be a place of worship, but they had turned it into a market.

Jesus also found **“others sitting at tables exchanging money” (John 2:13).** All Jews were required to pay a temple tax and so when they were in Jerusalem for Passover they would pay the temple tax. But the temple only accepted one kind of currency. And so if you're coming from a different country or a different region you would have exchange your country's currency for the currency accepted by the temple so you could pay the temple tax. Again Jesus has no problem with people exchanging their money into the right currency for what they need, but they could have been doing that anywhere in Jerusalem. The temple is a place of worship.

Jesus is very angry about this and our Gospel says that **“he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.”** Jesus is certainly angry in this passage. And someone might think, “I thought it was sinful to be angry?” But anger itself is not sinful. God expresses anger and wrath over sin. The problem for us is that we have sinful natures and so when we have an outburst of anger it's always tainted by sin. Well, Jesus here is angry but his anger is not tainted at all by sin. These people in the temple that day saw something they had never seen in another human before: an anger not tainted at all by sin. It's really quite remarkable that Jesus, one man, was able to drive all of the sellers and moneychangers out of the temple courts. Maybe it was because the sellers and moneychangers saw this anger not tainted by sin and it hit their conscience.

Jesus' anger was not tainted by sin, it came completely from his love for his Father's house. Our Gospel says, **To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!”** Markets are good. We should have places where we can buy and sell things. But Jesus did not want the market

set up in God's temple because important things were happening in God's temple. Jesus often taught God's word in the temple courts. People prayed and sang praise to God in the temple courts. People's sins were forgiven in the temple courts when people repented and brought their sacrifices and trusted in the promise to which those sacrifices pointed forward. God was worshiped in the temple courts. Important things happened in God's house.

No wonder Jesus had zeal for God's house. Our Gospel says: **His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."** Jesus was filled with zeal for God's house partly because of the things that went on in God's house: the teaching of God's word, prayer and praise to God. And when we think about the things that God does for us here in his house, then zeal for God's house begins to consume us too. Here God speaks to us in his word. He forgives our sins and we praise him in response. Here the prayers of God's gathered people go up before him like incense. When you send your children to Sunday School they hear the same Bible stories that Jesus heard and asked questions about when he was in the temple as a 12 year old boy. When we think about what God does for us here in his house, then zeal for his house starts to consume us and that inspires us to give offerings and volunteer our time because like Jesus we are consumed with a zeal for God's house.

And when we come here to God's house everything we do points to Jesus because Jesus not only cleansed the temple he was also the fulfillment of the temple. Our Gospel says, **"The Jews then responded to him, 'What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' They replied, it has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it again in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body."** (John 2:18-20) Looking back on it, we can see what Jesus was talking about. His body was destroyed on the cross and three days later he raised his body from the dead. But why did Jesus call his body a temple? Well, the Old Testament temple pointed forward to Jesus. How did the temple point forward to Jesus? Well, the temple in Jerusalem was the place where God had promised to dwell. Of course God is everywhere but he promised to dwell in a special way in the temple. Well, there a Bible passage that says that **"In Christ all the fullness of the deity dwells in bodily form"** (Colossians 2:9). All the fullness of the deity dwells in Jesus because Jesus is God.

And think of things that happened in the Temple. Well, there were sacrifices for sin in the temple. And Jesus is the sacrifice. Jesus said destroy this temple. That's referring to Jesus' death on the cross. But Jesus' death was the sacrifice that paid for our sins. John the Baptist said look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then three days later Jesus rebuilt the temple of his body he raised it from the dead. The Jews thought Jesus was talking about the temple in Jerusalem. They said, "It has taken forty six years to build this temple, there's no way you can build it again in three days. But what is easier to do: build a building in three days or raise someone from the dead? Jesus raised himself from the dead and he's going to raise you from the dead too. Because of Jesus' sacrifice we are going to be able to dwell in God's house forever. Amen.