

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – John 2:13-22 – March 7th, 2021

Do Jesus' actions surprise you in this passage? Let me put it this way. If anyone else besides Jesus would have made a whip and flipped over tables, we might have said that that person is acting obnoxious or is going too far.

We might agree that the temple courts are not the place to be changing money. We might agree that the temple courts are not the place to be selling the animals for sacrifice, but we might still ask, "Couldn't Jesus have gone about this in a more gentle way?"

Couldn't he have preached a sermon about how the temple courts are sacred? Couldn't he have said in the sermon that the temple courts are starting to resemble a market and this is not right? Wouldn't that have been a much more gentle way to correct this problem?

Or maybe Jesus could have gone right up to the moneychangers tables and told them, even told them strongly, that they were sinning by turning his Father's house into a market. Or maybe he could have gone to the temple authorities and asked them why they were allowing the selling of sheep and doves right in the sacred temple courts.

There are any number of ways that Jesus could have gone about this. Why does he make a whip and pour out their money and overturn their tables? Maybe it was because the people buying and selling thought that it wasn't that big of a deal. Maybe they thought, "The people need sacrifices. So what's the big deal if we sell them right here in the temple courts?" Maybe they rationalized it by saying, "It's just a convenient place."

No matter why Jesus went about it the way he did, this story makes me think, "Are there things that I do, that would make Jesus angry enough to make a whip and turn over my tables?" What sins do we commit that we think aren't that big of a deal? As a pastor I might be tempted to think, "It's not that big of a deal if I work that hard on my sermon. It's just another Sunday." Or as a worshiper you might be tempted to think, "It's not that big of a deal if I don't come to church or tune in online." Be careful of the sins that we don't think are that big of a deal.

Maybe Jesus went about it the way he did because they should have known better. These are religious people. They are there to make sacrifices to God. They should have known better that they were in God's house. What sins do we commit where we should know better, or we do know better?

Or maybe Jesus acted the way he did because they thought they didn't think they were doing anything wrong. They thought they were righteous. Isn't it interesting that Jesus didn't overturn Matthew the Tax-Collector's table? Instead he invited him to leave it and follow him. Jesus didn't overturn the tables of sinners, instead he ate at the tables of sinners because they knew they needed him.

And that's why Jesus cleansed the temple, so that sinners could find God's grace. You see, what sellers were doing wasn't wrong, it was where they were doing it. Yes, the people did need

animals for sacrifice, but Jesus was saying that this space is holy. Holy means set apart for a sacred purpose. And what was the purpose of the Temple courts?

Well, what did Jesus do in the temple courts? As a 12 year-old boy, Jesus listened to the teachers. As adult, Jesus taught in the temple courts. The purpose of this space is to hear the words of eternal life. To hear about how God loved you so much that he sent his only Son so that you could forgiveness of sins through faith in him.

The temple was set apart as a place for God's word to be taught. The temple was also set apart as a place of prayer. Jesus apparently cleared the temple twice. This reading comes from the beginning of John, John chapter 2. Jesus also cleared the temple at the end of his ministry, at the beginning of Holy Week. When he cleared the temple at the beginning of Holy Week he said that God's house is to be called "a house of prayer." Church is set apart as a place where God talks to us and also as a place where we talk to God. It reminds me that we have our prayer vigil coming up. It also reminds me of when we pray for people in the worship service. It also reminds me of when we confess our sins to God and hear the pastor say that our sins are forgiven.

When we see the important things that God's house is set apart for we can understand why Jesus had such zeal for God's house. The temple was a place where God's Word was taught. It was a house of prayer. The temple was also a place that pointed forward to Jesus.

The Jewish leaders asked Jesus for a sign to show that he had the authority to be doing these things. And Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and I will build it again in three days." And they said, "It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you will build it again in three days." But John tells us that the temple he was speaking of was his body.

The resurrection of Jesus is a sign that he is who he said he was. The resurrection of Jesus shows us that God has accepted his payment for our sins. And the resurrection of Jesus shows that we who believe in him will also be raised to live forever.

What Jesus says here also makes some think of his spiritual body, the church. The apostle Paul said that **"In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22).**

Here in God's house we gather as the body of Christ to pray for one another and for our whole world. Here in God's house we gather to worship the risen Jesus and to hear words of eternal life. What greater reason could we have to have zeal for our Father's house. Amen.