



Imagine a classroom full of students taking their final high school exams. The room is silent with students recalling everything they have studied over the last year. The teacher is quietly sitting at her desk grading papers when suddenly the door of the classroom flies open. In walks a student with five friends following closely. As the student intently approaches the teacher's desk she jumps up from her seat. Immediately he flips over her desk, throwing papers all over the room, pulling drawers out and making an utter mess of the classroom.

In his loudest voice he starts yelling at the students, expressing how corrupt the school has become. The teacher calls in the principal to come down and assist with the situation. Before he can leave the room the principal is standing near the doorway. The student yells: "You can fail me if you want, you can even throw me out; I don't care. This place is too corrupt. I am going to attend Stanford and get my law degree. One day I'll come back and shut this place down; your school is finished!" Then before anyone can stop him, he leaves the building.

Now all such stories are only partly parallel to the astonishing scene that occurred at the Temple in Jerusalem. No illustration can do justice to what Jesus did; we have to study the event ourselves to see what John wants us to see within it. One thing that I love about the way we preach the Bible here is that when a difficult text comes up we don't just skip over it. To be honest, when I first started looking at the text we're studying my first thought was, "Mark would give me the difficult passage to preach. He takes the story on being filled with joy and I have to deal with Jesus cleansing the temple!" The more I studied this passage the more I began to understand the purity of worship.

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. So 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. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

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 forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person (John 2:13–25).

It's interesting that John places the cleansing of the Temple in the beginning of his account while Matthew, Mark and Luke all place it at the end of their accounts. It actually makes perfect sense for there to be two cleansing of the Temple. As a scholar myself I think this is the first Temple cleansing and the second one puts the religious leaders over; it's the straw that broke the camel's back.

Time and Location

Let's start our study by looking at the importance of the time and location of this event. Jesus is heading up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover feast. For Jewish culture the Temple was the center of their known world. For this Passover, Jesus and His disciples were a handful of the estimated 2.5 million people making the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

If you remember back to Sunday School you probably learned about the Passover when the Israelites were captive in Egypt. God sent an angel throughout the town and he passed over the homes of the Israelites saving the firstborn from death. Every year the Israelites continued the tradition of observing the Passover; re-aligning their focus back on God. Interestingly enough we know that in a few years Jesus would be the sacrificial lamb that would atone for our sins on the cross, but for now He will celebrate the Passover.

Imagine what it would have looked like when Jesus entered the Temple and found it turned into a market place. The center of the Jewish known world is no longer a house of worship but a hotspot of unjust commerce. To make matters worse the merchants set up shop in the court of the Gentiles, hindering those who were farthest from God from worshipping Him. I wonder what went through the mind of Jesus as He stood at the entrance to the temple courts in awe, assessing everything taking place.

I don't think this surprised Jesus to see the people selling animals in the Temple and changing money. In Deuteronomy God commanded His people to celebrate the passover every year in the place He would designate. Hebrews from all over would have been traveling to the Temple. For some of these people the journey would have been too far to bring animals with them for the sacrifice so instead they would bring money to purchase the animal.

In fact, Scripture tells us Jesus would have seen this situation before. Luke gives us an account of when Jesus was 12 years old and after His parents left Jerusalem. I don't think they left Him there on purpose but He stayed behind to talk with the Jewish leaders. Mary and Joseph almost made it home but Jesus was nowhere to be found so they rushed back to Jerusalem to find Him. He would have had to see what was taking place in the Temple courts. Now Jesus is not a child anymore and He has the authority to do something about these people who are profiting in His Father's house.

Jesus Removes the Corrupt

So 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. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (verses 15–17).

See how Jesus responds. This is much different than the Jesus we heard about in Sunday School. This isn't the Jesus moms want their children to be like; this isn't the sterilized, safe version of the Jesus we can control. We are seeing the zealous Jesus, the true Temple, who cares deeply about people engaging in worship. To say it differently, this is the lion, not the lamb!

What would cause a zeal like this for His father's house? What Jesus saw happening in the Temple was an outrage! The men inspecting the animals people brought for the Passover were highly trained men. Rabbinical literature tells us they would spend up to 18 months on a farm learning to distinguish clean and unclean animals. If a person brought an animal they considered unclean they would have to purchase a new animal so they can join in the celebration. Bruce Milne portrays the picture like this: "Instead of solemn dignity and murmur of prayer there is the bellowing of cattle and bleating of sheep. Instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is noisy commerce."

It didn't stop with animals though. The money changers claimed their business was a necessity, sitting on the Temple steps changing foreign currency into Jewish currency because foreign currency wasn't an acceptable offering in the Temple. I don't know exactly how bad they were ripping people off but most

historians think it was pretty bad. Probably the saddest thing about this is Annas, the high priest, was behind the whole thing! Some historians called it the Bazar of Annas and related it to a trinket sale you would encounter in a foreign country.

To make it hurt for all of us, this would be like CPC having a money changer as you walked into the lobby of your campus. If you wanted to bring your offering you would have to exchange your American money for money approved to give here. On your way into worship you would have to take a hundred dollar bill and trade it in for an approved offering that could be worth 25-50% less of your original offering. Today, if this happened, you'd just change churches, but for a Jew this wasn't an option since the Temple was the only acceptable place of worship.

Are you starting to get an understanding of what triggers this response from Jesus? John told us that Jesus made a whip out of cords. Historical records tell us no weapons were allowed in the Temple courts. A merchant may have brought one in to herd their animals and Jesus could have grabbed it. No matter what He used, Jesus started to drive all from the Temple courts. That word "all" in the NIV could refer to people in addition to the animals He was driving out of the courts. One commentator said He must have appeared to be seven feet tall as His whip began to fly.

It doesn't stop there. Jesus proceeds to push the money off the tables of the money changers. In my mind Jesus is all upset and is kicking over the tables that these guys are using to exhort money out of people. He goes over to the guys who are selling doves and instead of breaking their cages He instructs them to get the doves out. While all this is taking place the disciples were watching in astonishment. Imagine the account from their perspective. With animals running amuck, people fleeing for the nearest exit, sheep bleating in distress, money flying all over and tables overturned it must have been quite a scene at the Temple. The silhouette of Jesus standing there with a whip in His hand, beads of sweat possibly dripping from His forehead. This morning if you walk away from this message with one thing, will you remember:

Jesus is Zealous about Worship

Jesus was not about to let the center of worship become a market place that exploited those who were trying to draw closer to God. It could be easy for us to talk about Jesus needing anger management but that would miss point of the text. Jesus is zealous about worship. For many it may be difficult to accept Jesus in this manner.

We have to remember that a god who is only loving, comforting and encouraging is a false god. Jesus would not be good if He was only able to express the emotions we want Him to express. He would be limited in His ability to express all ranges of emotion that we experience and make it impossible for us to know Him fully. Verse 17 reminds us that Jesus was consumed with zeal for the house of God. Consumed means to be eaten up, wolf

down, devour, swallow, gobble up. This zeal that consumed Him was for those who desired to worship at His Father's house.

What are you consumed with? Do you have a zeal for worship or is worship something that you tolerate? Where do you see injustice occurring that is hindering others from worshipping God? It seems to me, for the most part, we want a safe version of Jesus but He doesn't call us to safety. We want the lamb to comfort us, not the lion to convict us. What if we shared this story of Jesus removing the merchants to others and showed them it's ok to be zealous about worshipping God? Do you believe it's ok to be passionate about removing hinderances that block others from worshipping God? I honestly think more people would place their trust in Jesus Christ realizing it's ok to express anger as a Christian.

Now I know I am walking a fine line by using that statement. There may be some in here who have a difficult time with their temper and have inappropriate outbursts of anger; I am not condoning that. You may have been on the receiving end of someone else's anger and that hurts my heart. I am not condoning anyone blowing up on someone who cuts you off on the freeway or yelling at people in their place of business. I'm not saying that we should use violence as a vehicle to accomplish our selfish desires. Paul explains to us in Ephesians 5:26-27 that we can be angry but we are not to sin in our anger. We are not to let the sun go down while we are still angry and he relates anger to giving the devil a foothold. Please don't take a text about Jesus' zeal for worship and twist it to fit your anger problem.

Let's see how this zeal for worship is practically played out. In 1952 Everett Swanson visited South Korea to preach the gospel to the troops in the Republic of Korea army. During his visit he encountered children orphaned by the war. While in South Korea Everett was challenged by a missionary friend: "You have seen the tremendous needs and unparalleled opportunities of this land. What do you intend to do about it?" Four years later Everett starts what we currently know as Compassion International, a ministry dedicated to releasing children from poverty in Jesus' name.

In 2003 I meet Charity Fairfield who was passionate about sponsoring children with Compassion International. I'm pretty sure that part of our prenuptial agreement was that I had to sponsor a child. In January 2005 I started sponsoring Edgar Presley Romero De La Cruz in Peru.

This zeal that once consumed Everett Swanson is now a reality in my home. In 2006 Charity and I had an opportunity to visit Burkina Faso, in West Africa, and see first-hand the work of compassion. On that trip the compassion workers explained to us how they were actively breaking down walls that were hindering children from worshipping God. We saw first-hand how our monthly sponsorship gave children a hot meal, access to

medicine and an opportunity for education. How can you tell a starving, dying child about Christ? Jesus fought the injustice that occurred in the Temple courts that prohibited people from worshipping God and used His anger in a productive way.

Response from the Jews

Let's see the response from the Jews because obviously not everyone is happy with Jesus' response to removing the corruption. The Jews approach Jesus and ask Him for a sign to prove His authority. It's almost as if Jesus was to be a sidewalk magician for them. Jesus didn't have to give an account for purifying the man-made temple but He chose to respond. Jesus wasn't talking about the Jewish Temple; He was talking about His body as a temple.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" (verses 19-20).

Right here we have a shift in thinking that needs to occur. Throughout the Gospel of John we are going to see statements from Jesus that have a deeper meaning. This statement by Jesus reveals that He is already thinking about His death and resurrection, something the disciples didn't fully understand at the time. It also conveys to us that Jesus is the true Temple and there will come a time when people will no longer need the Jewish Temple to access God but will be able to access God through His son, Jesus Christ.

This comment about the temple would later be used against Jesus in His last 24 hours of life. During His trial someone would falsely accuse Him in regards to this comment (Mark 14:57-59) reminding everyone that Jesus said He was going to destroy the religious temple. The second time would come when Jesus was hanging on the cross (Mark 15:29-30). A passer-by yells at Him to come down from the cross, making mention that if He is able to build the Temple in three days He needs to come down and save Himself. We clearly see people misunderstood this comment, therefore John is careful to point it out early so we don't fall into the same mistake.

But the temple he had spoken of was his body (v. 21).

Many Believe in Jesus

So far we have seen Jesus head up to Jerusalem to visit the temple before the passover. While He was there He does the unthinkable and drives the merchants out who are exploiting those who have come to worship. After, the Jews approach Jesus looking for a sign and Jesus gives this obscure answer even the disciples didn't understand until He was raised from the dead.

This passage ends with an interesting three verses that honestly seem like some of the least important verses here, but don't be

fooled. John is using these verses as a transition to the next story but he is also reminding us about something.

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name (v. 23).

As we may have thought, Jesus wasn't asked to leave town after His clearing of the Temple. Instead John tells us that many people saw the signs He was performing in Jerusalem and believed in His name. We don't know exactly what these signs are but we do know the time of passover fostered a time where people were open to believing in God.

The truth of the matter is Jesus knew what was in the hearts of these people and He didn't allow their believing to influence His decisions.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person (verses 24–25).

In fact the sad part of their openness to God is that we don't see this group of people mentioned again. They believed in Jesus because of the signs they saw but their belief was no deeper. We see a reminder here that God clearly knows what is hidden in the depths of our hearts.

You may be saying to yourself: "So how do I apply this to my life? What is the take-away for me?" I'm glad you asked because I think there is one take-away we, on all our campuses, can apply to our lives. This morning will you begin to examine the condition of your heart? If Jesus showed up at your campus this

morning would He make a whip or would He praise God? Maybe your relationship with Christ was once filled with zealous worship but lately it seems more like an out-of-control marketplace that is hindering you from connecting with God. Your relationship that once started out on a high note is currently mute. Read 2 Corinthians 6:16. Paul encourages us to examine the condition of our heart.

We are the temple of the living God. Jesus came as the true Temple to bridge the gap from Him to God so we could freely worship Him. Now we are the Temple of God as Jesus Christ lives in us. We no longer need a Temple to approach God because we can do so freely through Jesus. This morning we need to return to that place of freely worshipping God. Just as Jesus removed the hinderances at the Temple will you remove the hinderances in your own life.

There is also a corporate aspect that we need to remember in this situation. We, as a body of believers on the Peninsula, need to constantly examine the actions of our heart to make sure we are not hindering others from worshipping God. We have to be careful our programs don't hinder those who are far from God from drawing near to God. We have to make sure that we have a space for those who are in desperate need of a savior to come and worship. We need to make sure that CPC is a place where people can come and freely worship without distraction.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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