



Today we continue our series in the Gospel of John we've entitled, "Come and See." Last week we looked at the first miracle Jesus performed—turning water into wine. I pointed out that Jesus loved being around people and celebrating with them. He wasn't a party pooper! The miracle taught us that Jesus provides for his people's needs and wants to fill us with joy. We also began to see how his ministry is replacing the religious duties of Judaism. He is New Wine. My hope and prayer was for God to fill you with more of his presence and joy this past week. I hope you prayed for that and I trust he filled you with joy.

Today we are going to see a completely different side of Jesus. This is a passage that will make us a little uncomfortable. I like talking about Jesus laughing at a party and filling us with joy. It's much more difficult to deal with a God who seems to fly off the handle. What makes Jesus angry? Have you ever thought about that? It's one thing to talk about God's love, quite another to talk about his anger. Maybe you are uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus got angry. One thing is for sure, you can't put Jesus in a nice little box and wrap a bow around him. Sometimes he has some hard things to say to us. Sometimes he does things that we don't understand. Last week he had a bottle of wine in his hand; today he's holding a whip. Jesus is not just a God who enjoys a good party, he is also One that loves the church enough to clean out what's wrong.

**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).**

### Jesus Clears the Temple

Like the miracle of turning water into wine, if you have been a Christian for any amount of time, this should be a familiar passage. But if you're not a Christian or a new one, it's easier to read over the importance of what's happening. What I need to do first is explain two ancient images in these verses that will help us understand what's going on here. John's audience knew very well the significance of the Jewish Passover and the Temple, but many of us do not. Let's look first at the Passover.

### The Passover

John, the writer of this Gospel, tells us Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover. The Passover was one of three big festivals for the Jewish nation. Every male Jew, from the age of twelve and up, was expected to attend the Passover in Jerusalem every year. Passover referred to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of God were slaves. They would smear the blood of the lamb on their doorposts as a signal to God that he should "pass over" their houses when he destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt. Passover celebrates the night when Israel left Egypt quickly and was freed from their oppressive rule. You can read about this in Exodus.

I want you to imagine for a moment what it must have been like for your people, your family, generation after generation, to be enslaved by a foreign empire for hundreds of years. Finally God hears your nations' cries and a million people are led by the mighty hand of God, with the prophet Moses, to a new land flowing with milk and honey. That is a reason to celebrate and to remind your children's children of the power and goodness of God. Passover was celebrated with a symbolic meal as well as many other activities during the week. During Jesus' time, large numbers of people would gather in Jerusalem to observe the annual Passover. Jerusalem was a city of roughly 50,000

inhabitants. During Passover it would swell to 150,000 people. So that's the Passover. Let's focus next on the Temple.

## The Temple

I can't emphasize enough the significance and importance of the Temple for the followers of God. The Temple was a sacred and holy place because they believed the very presence of God dwelt inside the holy of holies. The Temple was the location where heaven and earth intersected. Over Israel's history, there have been three temples: Solomon's, Zerubbabel's and the one Jesus talks about here which was built by King Herod. Wanting to appease his Jewish subjects, Herod constructed an enormous, ornate, cream-colored Temple of stone and gold. The gold and white stone was so bright when the sun shined on it that it was difficult to even look directly at the Temple. Construction began in 19 B.C. and the entire structure wasn't finished until A.D. 64, about 46 years, exactly what John writes. What you may not know is the Romans destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70, something Jesus predicted would happen.

The Temple was much more than a place of worship. It was the center of Jewish life in the first century. It was the center of government, law, religious life, and taxation. It set the moral, religious and political tone of the country. In our day the closest parallel would be the White House. That is why Jesus' clearing of the temple and saying he'd rebuild it in three days was not just upsetting, it was absolutely ridiculous. He was making a public protest in the center of the public square.

Jesus related to the Temple in several distinct ways. First, as a pious Jew who was zealous for the Lord, Jesus showed respect for the Temple. He referred to it as, "My Father's house" because God's presence was inside. The Father's house was supposed to be a place of worship, prayer, instruction and sacrifice. Can you imagine trying to pray and meet with God and all you can hear is the noisy bleating of sheep and bellowing of cattle? Not to mention the stench and filth of all the animals. Instead of brokenness and holy worship, there is also the sound and activity of noisy shopkeepers. Not a great picture of worship.

Jesus' zeal or passion led him to purge the Temple of moneychangers and merchants. Jews came from all over the Roman Empire, often traveling long distances to worship at the Temple. In order to worship, they needed an animal to sacrifice and they had to pay the Temple tax. It became a lucrative business to sell animals for sacrifice and exchange foreign currency into Jewish coins. The problem wasn't that they were selling animals and exchanging currency. The issue was **where** they were selling all these things. The flea market was set up in the courtyard of the Gentiles. In other words, the Jews were hindering Gentiles from worship. The Jews could worship; they had their own courtyard, but the Gentile area was turned into a swap meet. Merchants

shouldn't be in the temple area at all! This was a house of worship.

God was not just a God for the Jews, but a God for all people who believe in him through faith. Way back in Genesis 12, God appears to Abraham and tells him, "I will bless you and all your descendants so that you will be a blessing to others." The Jewish nation was called by God to be light and salvation to the Gentiles. Instead, they became a stumbling block with their rules, religion, and detestable practices. Gentiles could not worship God at the Temple, and that made Jesus angry.

Sometimes I hear people say, "God is love so how can you Christians be so intolerant of other people and what they do?" God is love but God can get angry because God is also holy. There is more to God than his love. And real love sometimes involves righteous anger. Out of love I appropriately discipline my children when they disobey and act a fool. I love them. God's anger was holy and aimed at sin and corruption. Because of love, Jesus makes a whip out of rope and begins to drive animals and people out of the courtyard. He also flips over the money changers and yells out, "Get out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" Jesus was forceful but not cruel. You can't easily drive out cattle and sheep without a whip of chords.

If you've seen some of the old movies that show Jesus doing this, what you see is him overturning a few tables and driving out a few people. But remember, this is the week of Passover and Jerusalem was packed with people. In reality, there were probably 30,000 people in and around the Temple and courtyard of the Gentiles. It would be like going to AT&T Park during a Giants game. It's not a sold-out game but it's filled with 30,000 people. How do you think you'd do if all you had was a bat and you needed to clear out the entire ballpark of people? Hard to do. But, if you are Jesus, if you are God, people run at the sound of your voice. People pack up their goods and leave when the Sovereign God of the universe, with authority, says, get out! Even the Jewish leaders didn't kick Jesus out of the Temple because he acted with such authority. No one dared to resist him.

What gets you righteously angry these days? Anything? Jesus was passionate about worship. What are you passionate about? I think one of the secrets to finding joy in the Christian life is to be passionate about things God is passionate about. I get weekly emails from International Justice Mission. They are a Christian organization that is passionate about human trafficking and injustice. I received this email just the other day:

"A few days ago, my IJM colleagues in Mumbai helped police rescue young women who had been trafficked to a brothel in a massive red-light district. The brothel is a crumbling, two-story building at the end of a muddy alley. Over the last two years, IJM has helped police rescue other young women trafficked for sex from this very same building. New managers keep opening

up brothels in the building, trafficking new girls to be sold for a profit. This time, the brothel keeper was arrested and can be charged for trafficking crimes. It's critical that other would-be traffickers see that there's a risk in doing business this way. It's critical that we break this cycle of violence."

Sex trafficking gets me righteously angry. It gets God angry too. What can we do? We can pray. We can give. We can serve. LoveWorks for example is just a small way to serve hurting people in our communities and show them the love of Jesus. Instead of a whip, we get out the servant's towel and serve the community. It's not much, but it's something.

## Jesus Replaces the Temple

In response to all this the religious bureaucrats ask Jesus, "Sir, what sign can you show us to prove you have the authority to do all this?" In other words, where's your credentials? Where's your permission slip? The Temple was supposed to be a place of sacrificial purification and the Jewish authorities should have known better! But, their greed and unwillingness to admit their guilt consumed them. Their hard hearts could not see that the Temple cleansing itself was a sign. It's like the billboard I've seen that says, "If you're looking for a sign from God, here it is!" Malachi 3:1 prophesied the cleansing of the Temple was something the Lord and his Messenger would do. Jesus' actions proved his deity; he is God and his messiahship; he is the long-awaited Anointed One. Jesus answered them, "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.*"

Jesus' statement was ridiculous to the Jews, "*It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?*" Jesus was doing far more than responding to the corruption he saw. Israel was failing in its mission to the Gentiles and true worship had degenerated into self-serving religion. Jesus is challenging the very system of the temple itself—its religion, its authority, its worship. By doing all this, Jesus is stating in a definitive way God dwelt in him.

Last Sunday we learned the new wine Jesus brings surpasses the plain water of Judaism. The Jewish vessels of purification were filled with new things; better things. The wine that's been served already through Jewish religion and ritual is exhausted and Jesus' new wine is replacing it. Here, Jesus replaces the Temple with his own body! This act answers the question, how can God love us and still judge sin? The original temple system was temporary. It was a shadow of greater things to come. Through temple sacrifices, the blood of animals was shed for the forgiveness of sins. Because Jesus is the Son of God, new wine, and the final sacrifice, the Temple is no longer a place, it is a person! Jesus is the New Temple. When the temple of his body was destroyed, three days later he raised it from the ground. Jesus raised himself out of the grave! Jesus showed the love of God through his death and it was the final payment and substitute for our sin.

This is why Jesus brought up his death and resurrection in the way he did. He was telling the Jews that his body is the true object of worship, not the temple. No longer does the temple represent the presence of God. From now on Jesus represents the presence of God. We don't have to go to the temple to worship God. It is through Jesus Christ that we worship. We worship a person, not a place. Again, this was absolutely radical for the Jews to comprehend. In fact, it was one of the reasons they crucified Jesus.

Let's look finally at the last three verses of this passage. In them we see how Jesus deals with inadequate faith. The disciples remembered the scriptures and recalled the words of Jesus and believed (v. 17 and v. 22). But, there were many other people who saw his miracles and believed, but it wasn't real faith. These people only believed because they saw miraculous signs and because of their lack of faith; Jesus would not "entrust" himself to them. Still today we want Jesus to prove himself to us by showing his power. We want a sign and fail to see that a sign has already been given. Through his word, the Bible, we learn of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We respond in faith and he responds as well. A sign has already been given.

These last verses remind us that Jesus knows our hearts. He knows you better than you know yourself. You can pretend with others, but Jesus knows the real you. Are you really walking with Jesus or just playing "spiritual house"? It's funny because churches are supposed to be the places where we can be authentic, where people can know you, the real you, and love you anyway. But, just like the Jews of Jesus' day, temples and churches soon become religious institutions where we hide and pretend everything is ok. The holy places of worship easily become flea markets filled with consumers. Are you known at CPC? Are you a part of a small group of people who really know you and love you anyway? I hope so. We are working hard to connect people to community at CPCNorth.

Here's what I've been thinking all week. If Jesus showed up at CPC, would he make a whip or would he praise God for what is happening here? I really don't know. I hope he would praise God for what's happening here—our worship and passion for God, the transformed lives of people, children and students hearing about Jesus every week, hundreds of people in small groups learning and growing in their faith, our commitment to follow him no matter what the cost. But, I am sure there are some things he'd want to clean up as well. What are we doing to serve the poor, widows and orphans? Maybe he'd look at our budget and ask why we are not spending more money to reach people far from him? I don't know what he would say or do.

What about you? Jesus is the temple. The church is also the temple of God, but the Apostle Paul says later we are the temple

of the Holy Spirit. God loves you enough to come into your house, into your life with a whip and a loud voice and get things in order when he needs to. What does he need to clean out in your life this morning? Is there something you are doing that gets Jesus angry? Are you struggling with an area of sin? Tell Jesus about it this morning—he already knows—then walk away from it, repent and ask him for a clean start. If you need help, our church has a ton of resources to help you find community, fight sin, and get the healing you need.

We are going to end the service with focusing on the true object of our worship—Jesus the True Temple. It's all about him. We live for his glory and we worship him alone.

*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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Catalog No. 1384-4N