
LIFE IN HIS NAME
A NEW KIND OF TEMPLE

John 2:13-25

While you turn to John 2:13-25, I just want to say “Amen” to part of what this young woman shared. It’s humbling to hear her testimony and the testimony of others -- how God uses the Church and uses community. If you are saying, “You know, I am here, but I don’t know that I always feel like I belong,” I really want to encourage you to consider three commitments.

1. Every single Sunday morning. Come on time. Come early. Make it a commitment.
2. Get into a home group -- a small group where you can really get to know the people and help flesh out the Word in your life, to make it accountable. Don’t see home group life as just optional.
3. Wednesday night discipleship courses of all kinds as well as a monthly prayer meeting. Just settle it. These are commitments in my life because I belong to the church family here.

Hopefully those will be means of God’s grace for you.

John 2:13-25 will be our text as we keep studying our way through the gospel of John. I would like to pray and then I will read God’s Word.

Lord, as we sang these songs this morning and the worship team led us, I thought about the lyrics as we prayed and shared Scripture already. We had beautiful encouragement from our brother and our sister’s amazing life and testimony. God, you are so good. We just want to say, Lord, thank you. Thank you for salvation. Thank you for grace. Thank you for the gospel. Thank you for community life in you. You are so patient. You are so faithful. You are so kind. And now, Lord, we come to your Scripture, to your Word, and we seek the help of your Holy Spirit. Lord, I want to pray that you would speak directly to each one of us through the teaching, the preaching of this passage of Scripture, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

“A New Kind of Temple.” John Chapter 2, verses 13 through 25.

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.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Today is Super Bowl Sunday. I was just reading a little caption this week that Church is more important than the Super Bowl, which I do agree with. So if your pastor preaches a good sermon, take a whole thing of Gatorade and dump it on his head, which I don't agree with. There are certain things that we associate with football, with the Super Bowl, that we would say are not appropriate in church. I will not, "Dab." Some of you have no idea what that means. Some of you think of Cam Newton. Others of you think of a dance. I will not stand up here and yell "Omaha" over and over and over again, because we are here to worship. There are just certain things that are not bad in and of themselves, but they are not appropriate.

Jesus comes to the temple in John, Chapter 2, and cleanses the temple. Through not just his words, but through his very actions he tells them, "There is a lot of what you are doing in this place of worship that is not appropriate.

We came out of the first sign of Jesus. Adam preached two weeks ago on the turning of water into wine and in verse 11 we read this: "This is the first of his signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him."

Do you remember when we first began our study of the gospel of John? We said that John is unique -- he tells you his purpose in writing at the end of the gospel. John 20:30-31, just to remind you:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these (signs) are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Back to Chapter 2, verse 11: "Jesus did this in Cana of Galilee, manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him." So, what do you have? You have sign...glory...belief. If you put it into the context of the purpose stated in Chapter 20, Jesus does these miracles. He does these signs. He reveals God the Father. People behold his glory for the purpose of believing and the result is life. Eternal life. Abundant life. Not just a duration of life, but a quality of life beyond anything we have known apart from Jesus.

Then we come to this next section and look at the conclusion of it. We read verse 22: "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." You see again this pattern. Jesus is acting. They behold Jesus, they behold his glory. They believe. And John just keeps saying this over and over again.

The very next verse, verse 23, which we also read, summarizes his time there in Jerusalem attending the Passover feast: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing." Do you see it? He is just repeating over and over again: sign...belief...life. Sign...glory...belief...life. Sign...belief.

He is saying to you as you hear these words, as you read the gospel of John, "If you want to know how to respond to what I am saying, it's faith. Place your trust, your absolute trust in Jesus Christ. As you behold his glory, trust in him. Put all your life into Jesus. Trust and believe in him."

There are many things that are fascinating about this passage. But what's fascinating about this passage among other things is that you come out of this miracle where Jesus is revealed as the Lord of the feast. He turns water into wine -- he keeps the party going. There is this replacement of shame with the glory of Jesus. We behold his glory in that way, but this is so different! Jesus is angry. Jesus makes a whip and he snaps this whip and runs everyone out, runs the animals out,

overturns the tables. There is a passion and a zeal and an anger that seems incompatible with the picture that we just read in the earlier part of John, Chapter 2.

We think about Jesus and his gentleness and his invitation for all who are weary to come, all who are burdened to come to him and to receive rest. We see Jesus welcoming the children and many images of Jesus that put us in a place so that when we come to the end of John, Chapter 2 we say, "Wow, I don't know if I like this Jesus as much. I like the gentle Jesus." But John has a purpose here and he wants you to see a fuller picture of the glory of Christ, so that you might believe and have life.

The passage moves in two parts, two movements. There is the cleansing of the temple, and then there is a second part where Jesus teaches us that he replaces the temple. But before we really look at that, just ask yourself this question: "What does this passage teach me about Jesus? What does it reveal? How do I behold his glory?" You could ask the question in a number of ways. You could say, "What is it that makes Jesus angry, and why is that glorious? How does it show me glory from a particular angle, a facet of glory that I might not otherwise be aware of?"

Let's look at the first movement in verses 13 through 27, where Jesus cleanses the temple. I would summarize this section with this phrase: "Zeal for thy house has consumed me." That's a quote from Psalm 69:9. It hangs over the cleansing of the temple as a banner, as a title. Jesus is zealous for something. There is something that burns in the heart of God -- a passion that is consuming. It's described as a consuming passion. We see Jesus cleansing the temple as a fulfillment of that passion.

So, what is he passionate for? Well, in some ways you could say that this is the story of the bible. God made us to have a relationship with him, to dwell with him. In the beginning, in Creation, man lived, male and female, in the garden, communing with God -- and that is violated by sin. There is the Fall, and Adam and Eve -- mankind -- is cast out from the presence of God and from the garden. In many ways, the revelation that takes place from Genesis 3 on through the end of the Bible is the story of God expressing his desire to dwell in the midst of his people. You see the building of the tabernacle and God dwelling in the tabernacle and the temple, and this theme that runs throughout.

Christ is passionate for you to know him and to know the Father. He is passionate that you would truly worship God, that there would be a personal, intimate knowledge, a relationship, and that

there would be true worship. If you wanted to try to put a simple answer to the question of “What is it that makes Jesus so angry?” it is false worship. It is hypocritical worship.

Let’s look at what was wrong. What is missing so that Jesus cleanses the temple? I am going to give you three words to help you hang some content on to try to understand what might be missing here.

1. The first word is “Focus.” Here is what I mean. It’s the Passover. When you start this passage, there is a description of what’s happening that’s easy to miss. Jesus goes to Jerusalem and he goes to the Passover. Think about what John has already told you. Do you remember John the Baptist in Chapter 1, verse 29? “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Remember, he is preparing the way, and then he presents Jesus. The title that he gives Jesus is: “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” The Passover Lamb comes to the Passover. It’s amazing! He doesn’t just show up, but in coming he cleanses and redefines what worship really is and how we will worship God.

Hundreds of thousands of people are pouring into Jerusalem. The population of Jerusalem will triple or quadruple, during this Passover feast. They are coming to worship and there is a certain prescription for how they need to worship. They need to offer sacrifices and give an offering. They have to pay the tax or give the offering in a certain form, so there are individuals in the outer court, the court of the Gentiles. The Gentiles could come into this court and go no further. There are individuals who are providing a service in that court. They are selling animals for sacrifice and they are exchanging currency.

Jesus looks at this scene going on in the court of the Gentiles. We can speculate all we want as to exactly what’s going on in the mind of Jesus. We could think about, “Well, the Gentiles -- this is their only place of worship. This is as far as they come. There is no way they can worship here in this scene.” But we are not given that kind of specificity. We are just told that Jesus rebukes them and he gives them these words: “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

This is what’s interesting. You may be familiar with the cleansing of the temple as told by Matthew, Mark, or Luke. They speak of this event at the end of Jesus’ ministry and record different words. Jesus tells them that the temple is to be a house of prayer for all nations

and they have made it a den of thieves, or a den of robbers. I think it's important not to interpret John 2 in light of our knowledge of Matthew.

One of two things has happened. Either John has taken the event and for thematic purposes is telling it at the beginning of Jesus' life instead of at the end, because he is not really that interested in the chronology -- he is interested in building a certain theme for you. He doesn't claim to be giving you a chronological report. But more likely (and I would strongly hold to this view) Jesus cleansed the temple twice, once at the beginning of his ministry and once at the end. This tells you then that this was not just a gesture when you consider the fact that it was repeated. It was not just for effect. This reflects the heart of God.

Focus. I think clearly Jesus is rebuking them for failing to focus upon God. When we think about true worship, our focus is to be completely without distraction, purely, exclusively upon God. Their focus is on many different things.

We suspect that there is a rebuke of commercialism here, that they are distracted and more interested with the things that are making worship possible. I think we could argue that they are providing a legitimate service. They are helping people give. They are helping people sacrifice. We don't know. We can suspect that they were greedy and that there were things going on in the heart in terms of the percentages they were taking that were inappropriate. That's certainly there in the latter cleansing. But Jesus' rebuke here is much simpler. He just runs them all out. Think of Luke 16:14, "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him." No doubt, we see a rebuke for greed as well.

There are things that we do even in our day to help us worship, but we need to be cautioned and we need to ask ourselves, "Is our focus on God?" There are things that support worship, but there is a place where the things that support worship become unholy because they replace worship. Let me say that again. There is a place where the things that support worship become unholy because they replace worship.

It's interesting, even when I get together with a group of pastors, what they talk about. If you hear Christians talking, they will talk about the music, the style of music, the volume of music, the length of the service. The pastor is funny, the pastor is not funny, the pastor is this: good-looking, intelligent, simple. We create celebrities. We manufacture styles. We

emphasize preferences. And if we are not careful, though all those things are good, we take our focus off God. We put it on a person or we put it on a preference.

I will never forget when a new pastor came to First Presbyterian -- Mike Potts. He spoke here not all that long ago. He had become a friend and I appreciated a lot of the qualities about this man. Shortly after he had been there, my wife and I were at an ice cream shop getting ice cream and we met someone who went there. We were excited. These people went on and on and on about the length of the service and how long this poor man preached. Then they got specific. "You can't even put a roast in the oven and feel like it will be cooked appropriately because he is just going to go on and on and on." I thought, "Wow." The focus is to be upon God.

Adam would tell you, I would tell you, Stefan would tell you, our elders would tell you, that you are led by very flawed men. Even the best of men are very flawed. In our particular style and approach to worship we are trying to think through, we want to serve you, we want to honor God. But we understand, I think, that we are just this little speck in a big world in 2000 years of Church history, and we need God's grace to help us focus on the Lord. The first word is "Focus."

2. The second word is "Heart." True religion is religion of the heart. John Newton published a series of his letters in his day (1700's and 1800's), calling the Church to a religion of the heart -- attacking formalism and external religion and religion that just focuses on the outside and not on the inside. Much of the teaching of Jesus calls us to examine our hearts. The entire Sermon on the Mount is an expose of worship of the heart. We are not just fighting against adultery or murder, but we are fighting against lust in the heart, anger and hatred in our hearts. I think the second word helps us focus on the nature of true religion in that it comes from the inside out. We are aware of the fact that we know that behavior is important and we can become overly focused on external behavior and trying to control that behavior without really looking at our hearts.
3. The third word is "Holiness." When something was used in the temple, it was said to be holy. It was set apart. It was separated. It wasn't a common vessel or a common instrument. It was reserved for God alone. Jesus is teaching us here that when we worship

and we speak about worship, we want the focus to be upon God. It's a religion of the heart and holiness matters. Holiness is a priority. It's important. We give ourselves to the Lord.

Our brother spoke about fear in his own life when he and another brother came up here to give their testimony. It was interesting, as we prayed Wednesday night -- God just put us in a place to pray for people who were battling fear. This simple truth just came to mind over and over in verse after verse: God wants us to give him our hearts and for us to be a holy dwelling place for the Lord. When that happens, there is no limit to what God will do and to the prayers that God will answer.

We saw it last week when Rob Hoskins was preaching. There was a very powerful moment in the message that he shared. He talked about the ministry of One Hope just exploding and taking off. Before long, they were being asked to provide millions of copies of God's Word. The price of it was overwhelming and his father was before the Lord, just praying and asking. The message came from the Lord that, "Nothing is too difficult for me. Do you think it's any harder for me to provide 10,000,000 bibles than 100 bibles? I'll give you whatever you need. The doors are open. But this one thing I require: that your heart be pure."

You find this message over and over in Scripture. Eli was rebuked. He honored his sons more than he honored God, and God sent him this message, saying, "I am going to withdraw from you my favor, for those who honor me I will honor and those who despise me I will lightly esteem."

2 Chronicles 16:9 -- the life of King Asa. He was a man that had learned to trust God, but at the end of his life he stumbled. He trusted in something and someone other than God. This famous verse: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show his might on behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward him."

Holiness. We give ourselves to God and then the world is unlocked before us. Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Worship: Focus on God -- Beginning in the Heart -- Holiness, separated unto the Lord.

Let's go to part 2: "Jesus Replaces the Temple," verses 18 through 22.

After Jesus does this, the religious leaders come to him and ask for a sign. They want to know upon what authority Jesus is acting this way. I don't know if you think about this, but if someone

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came in to this worship service and started running musicians out with a weapon, with a whip, we would do more than say, "Excuse me. On what authority are you doing this? Could you give us a sign?" Their response in part tells you they knew the rebuke was in order. They knew that spiritually they were off.

There are those times in our lives where God sends us messengers. We don't like the form in which it comes. We may not like the person who delivers the message. We may be married to the messenger. And our response is the same: "Who gives you the right?" We don't deal with the content of the message, right? So they demand a sign. Then the most curious response - Jesus answers them: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

This sign given by Jesus has a double meaning. In one sense, Jesus is telling them (and he will do this more directly later) that this physical temple will be destroyed. You could say it this way: Their false religion, their hypocrisy, their materialism is hated by God. God hates sin, but he really hates religious sin, and their sin is going to bring the judgment of God and destruction of that temple. In 70 A.D. it happens. Rome comes in and destroys the temple.

There is a second fulfillment or way to look at this sign, which is their sin. Our sin will destroy Jesus, bring destruction on him. They will kill him. Our sin will kill him. The punishment for our sin will be placed on him, and then in three days he will raise it up.

We are just getting to the good part, okay? All of that is introduction, because it's an important introduction, and the last three or four minutes here is really the glory of who Christ is. I think the introduction is important because you and I need to know that Jesus is zealous about true worship. He is zealous for your heart.

You know, there is this tension we feel. Someone was reminding me yesterday that every so often I give this rebuke (the person used this word) for people coming late to the service. I'm not sure it's an effective rebuke. Often I use humor, because I'm battling this tension. It's the paradox of Christianity. Jesus welcomes people: "Anyone, everyone come to me." He welcomes the prostitute, the tax collector, the "horrible sinner," as we classify them, but it's not "Come as you are and stay as you are." There is this confrontation, this transformation, which comes in Christ.

There are people that come legitimately late, and people who have to leave legitimately late, or they move around for health reasons, or all of the above, and there are others of us who just

struggle for whatever reason. But listen, I am serious about this. I want you to hear this. There is a place where we need to know that these things are important, and that when we worship the Lord, we want to sing to God from our hearts!

Here's the problem. Here is the real challenge in the glory of Jesus. The moment I start talking about these things, we move away from the heart and we are talking about externals. Now we have shifted the focus to: "Wow, what's really important here is that you come on time. He is really serious about getting people here on time. Does he understand we live in South Florida and that's never really going to happen?"

I could talk about giving. I could talk about finances, but it's loaded with emotional issues and objections, and in some senses it's external. Do you see just how impossible the task is to get true worship? How many defenses have we built up to keep God from getting to our hearts? Think about your arguments in marriage and in family relationships. How good we get at avoiding the real issue of our fault and our sin, and how reluctant we are to really take a hard look at our own hearts. Amen? Right.

So what does Jesus say? It's glorious. Let's go to Psalm 69. Here is verse 9, which I said reads as a banner over this passage: "For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me." Here is what's happening. This psalm is attributed to David. If you read the first eight verses, David has serious enemies. Verses 4 and 5:

More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

Here is what David is saying: "Yeah, I'm not perfect. I have sinned. But there are so many people that hate me. More people hate me than the hairs on my head. They are mighty and they are powerful and they hate me."

Then when he gets to verse 9, this is what he says: "I just want to be with you, God. It consumes me. Even that, they use against me." That's an important factor. "Even the fact that I want to be in your house, they use against me. The reproach against you is falling on me."

He builds that in verses 10-12:

When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

“I know I’m not a perfect man! Why do all these people hate me? I just want to worship God. I say I want to worship God and they make fun of me and they make songs about me. The drunks sit around and mock me.” He is just getting going. He is upset. He is persecuted. He is oppressed.

We come to verses 19-21:

You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

That should ring a bell.

Verses 22-24:

Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.

Do you hear what he is doing? He is saying, “God, I want you to pour out your wrath on them. Make them blind. Make them tremble before you.”

Verses 25-28:

May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

He is praying for the wrath of God to be poured out on his enemies. How does Jesus fulfill this psalm? That wrath, that hatred for sin is put on Jesus for you. “Zeal for your house consumes me.” “God, don’t hold back. Even when I go to worship you, these enemies of yours don’t understand it.

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They don't understand what true worship is like. They mock and ridicule and oppose. Do you know what they do? They come and they say, 'Show us a sign. By what authority do you do this?'"

You know what Jesus does? Instead of saying, "I've had it with your false worship -- I'm going to kill every one of you," he says, "I'm going to take the wrath you deserve on myself because I burn with a passion for my people to know me." "Zeal for my Father's house consumes me." That, my friends, is glorious.

I will just confess to you that there are times when I'm praying and my mind wanders. There are times when I lose focus. There are times when I'm distracted. Worse, much worse, there are times when I am tempted to take the things of God and use them for personal gain and self-promotion. There are times when I take a life of worship and I use it to be about me instead of a focus upon him. There are times when I am more concerned about the external appearance than I am the condition of my own heart. There are times when I cannot truly say I am separated unto God because I am pursuing my own idols of the heart. And I thank God that I have a savior who knows that sin more perfectly than I do. He hates it and he says, "I will take all the wrath you deserve, Brian Brookins, upon myself on the cross and offer myself as the Passover Lamb on your behalf."

There is a glorious picture here -- Jesus passionately comes to offer himself so that you might truly worship the Lord. That is the invitation today.

Having heard that, knowing that as we do, Lord, help us to examine our lives. Help us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to you, knowing that it ultimately will happen because you have paid the penalty for our sin.

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Let's pray.