

CLEARING THE TEMPLE AREA

Mar. 4, 2018 John 2: 13-25 & Ex. 20: 1-17

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

It is Passover, the greatest of all the feasts. Imagine yourself as a pilgrim who has eagerly planned your trip to the holy city. It is probably a once in a lifetime trip for you. Others surround you, with their longing to celebrate this most special occasion. You notice the high priest, who is also eagerly awaiting the crowds with their Messianic hopes and full purses. Roman guards are all over the place, ever on the watch for anything that could develop into trouble. They dread this feast, and wish it were over for another year. Tensions are high. The word is out to watch out for this Jesus fellow. All in all, it is a time of high hopes and higher tensions. Pick someone to notice: moneychanger, temple priest, High priest, Sadducee, Pharisee, another pilgrim. What are you seeing? Feeling? Hearing?

Jn. 2:13-25

The **Passover** of the **Jews** was near, and Jesus went up to **Jerusalem**. 14 In the **temple** he found people selling **cattle, sheep, and doves**, and the **money changers** seated at their tables. 15 Making a **whip** of cords, he drove all of them out of the **temple**, both the **sheep** and the **cattle**. He also poured out the **coins** of the **money changers** and overturned their tables. 16 He told those who were selling the **doves**, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" 17 His disciples **remembered** that it was written, "**Zeal** for your house will **consume** me." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What **sign** can you show us for doing this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this **temple**, and in **three days** I will **raise** it up." 20 The Jews then said, "This **temple** has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in **three days**?" 21 But he was speaking of the **temple** of his body. 22 After 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. 23 While he was in **Jerusalem** during the **Passover** festival, many believed in his name, for they could see the signs he was performing. 24 For his part, Jesus would not **trust himself** to them because he knew them all. 25 He needed no one to give him testimony about **human nature**. He was well aware of what was in **man's heart**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus says "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" Do we do this yet today? If so, how?

PRAYER: Brother Jesus, you took on the barter system of dealing with God in your day. God I give you this, for this. When your whole life, death and resurrection shouts "God is NOT a merchant. All God wants is to receive my freely given love. Because you show us that this is the system God is on. Love begets love. Help me to resist the barter system in my life and prayers. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

PASSOVER: Passover is the defining moment in the faith life of the Jewish people, it was the time they followed the ancient laws of sacrifice with the appropriate animal or grain. This was to get right with God for another year. The feast lasted for days. The rituals were many, and precisely defined.

Imagine how the various participants viewed this feast: the High Priest, the soldiers, the pilgrims, the disciples, even Jesus himself. Who can you identify with the easiest? Why?

JEW: In John's gospel, Jews, was the catchword for the religious authorities. This by no means included the majority of those of the Jewish faith. These were the people who were for the most part Sadducees who ran the temple and the religious lawyers who interpreted the laws. They had a combination of religious conviction coupled with political expediency.

How can power or wealth blind someone to the new thing that God is bringing into the world? Are there examples of this dynamic operating today? Where?

JERUSALEM: Jerusalem was the holy city, the place of the temple and all that surrounded faith practices. It was where one got close to God.

Where do you feel closest to God?

TEMPLE: The temple was the center of the religious life of Judaism. It was also the place of the state treasury. When the temple was destroyed, the people felt cut off from God.

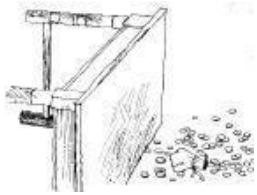
How do you think you would react to this? How would you feel if someone burned down your church? Would it endanger your faith life? If so, why? If not, why?

CATTLE and SHEEP: Different rituals specified certain offerings to God. The offering often needed to be an unblemished, first born specimen. It cost dearly to sacrifice this to God, but it signified that you acknowledged that all was a gift from God. If you came from a distance, you counted on buying the animal at the temple.

How do you show that you understand that all you have is a gift from God?

DOVES: Doves were the gift of the poor person. They could be substituted for the more costly offerings such as cattle or sheep. They also carried the symbolism of the Spirit of God.

What are the gifts of the poor today? Have you ever found yourself "poor" enough to need a substitute offering? How did you feel about that?



MONEYCHANGERS: Since the common currency was unacceptable to use in the temple, the money had to be exchanged. Like today, often a traveler lost money in the process. Since there was no other space available, the operation was set up in the court of the Gentiles. So a Gentile (non-Jew) lost the only available place to be in the temple during the Passover. (See information about picture below)

How do you think the Gentiles felt seeing their space turned into a temple Kwik-Trip rip off center? Do you suppose it affected their budding attraction to the Jewish faith? If you were a merchant or moneychanger, would you have any qualms about taking advantage of the worshippers?

WHIP: John is the only gospel that speaks of the animals, and therefore the only one needing the whip. A whip is a sign of authority. Since weapons were banned from the temple Jesus fashioned a tool for dealing with the situation. The authorities rightly interpreted this event as an attack on the power center of Judaism.

How do you feel about the idea of Jesus with a whip? What do you think the disciples made of this incident? If you had been the high priest, how do you think you would have responded? If you were one of the poor, how might you have responded?

COINS: Coins not only were the medium of exchange, they were also loaded with symbolism. The coins you carried identified much about you and your loyalties. If you were a pious Jew, just carrying the wrong coins made you ritually unclean. The person betrayed their real allegiance when offering the coin of the realm.

Having money, or the things money can buy, is one of the most significant ways we identify each other. What medium of exchange identifies our values today?

REMEMBERED: John has the disciples remembering throughout the gospel. It is a case of 20/20 hindsight, and the device John uses to tell his version of the good news.

If you were writing an account of someone/something some seventy years after the actual events, how would you indicate the insights you now have?

ZEAL: Zeal is a loaded word. The disciples make sense out of Jesus' behavior by connecting with Ps 69:9. It also gives us a glimpse into the way the disciples were beginning to see Jesus and his mission.

What does the word zeal mean to you? If you were called a zealot, would it be a compliment? Zealots in Jesus' day were often seen as terrorists. What about zeal makes us uneasy? Can zeal ever be admirable? When?

CONSUME: Jesus seems to be taken over by feelings that make him act out of character. He will become the one consumed at the Last Supper.

How does the word, consume, help you understand Jesus? Have you ever set aside caution and respond freely to your inner truth like he did? If so, how does this help you to make sense of this story?

THREE DAYS: Three days the length of time someone had to be dead, before they were considered dead dead. Since they lacked the instruments to check the body functions that we have, they used this criterion to indicate that resuscitation was now impossible. Many thought that Jesus was spirited away and revived, and did not really die.

What do you think your response would be if someone predicted they would raise from the dead today? Can you feel the struggle within the disciples as they tried to imagine this reality?

RAISE: The Pharisees believed in some kind of personal immortality, but the Sadducees did not. Since the Sadducees' were in charge of the temple, it is no wonder that they responded in the way they did.

Try to imagine the response of all those who were there that day to this remark of Jesus. How do you think you would have responded? Do you really believe that there is a personal existence after physical life?

TRUST HIMSELF: Often we hear that Jesus is conscious of someone's motivation. Here he knows not to be taken in by human duplicity.

Remember the last time you also hesitated to trust yourself to someone. How can this memory help you to go deeper into this text?

HUMAN NATURE / MAN'S HEART: Being the son of man Jesus was totally familiar with human emotions, both good and bad. *Does this help you to connect with this scripture in any way? If so, how?*

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 2:13-22 // Mt. 21:12f; Mk. 11:15ff; Lk. 19:45f; Jn. 2:17 // Ps. 69:10; Jn. 2:18 // Jn. 6:20; Jn. 2:19 // Mt. 26:61; Mk. 14:58; Mt. 26:61; Mk. 15:29; Acts 6:14; Jn. 2:22 // Jn. 5:39; Jn. 2:23 // Jn. 4:45;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Ex. 20:1-17; [Ps. 19:8-11](#); 1 Cor. 1:22-25; Jn. 2:13-25; Revised Common Lectionary: Ex. 2) 1-17; [Ps. 19](#); 1 Cor. 1:18-25; Jn. 2:13-22;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

What we admire, we reverence. What we reverence, we prefer to self. What we worship, we prefer to everything.

Fr. Jonah Wharff ([homily](#) 9/25/09)

The test of worship is how far it makes us more sensitive to the "beyond in our midst," to the Christ in the hungry, the naked, the homeless, and the prisoner. Only if we are more likely to recognize him there after attending an act of worship is that worship Christian rather than a piece of religiosity in Christian dress. John A. T. Robinson (1919-1983), *Honest to God*

To give God the service of the body and not of the soul – is hypocrisy. To give God the service of the soul and not of the body is sacrilege. To give God neither is atheism and to give God both is worship. – Anonymous

The nominal Christian pays homage to something about Jesus, rather than worshipping the man himself. For this reason, nominal Christians will extol the moral teachings of Jesus, the faith of Jesus, the personality of Jesus, the compassion of Jesus, the world view of Jesus, the self-understanding of Jesus, etc. None of these worships Jesus as the Christ, but only something about him, something peripheral to the actual flesh-and-blood man. This is why when the almighty God came into the world in Jesus, he came as the lowest of the low, as weakness itself, as a complete and utter nothing, in order that we would be forced into the crucial decision about him alone and would not be able to worship anything about him. Robert L. Short, "Gospel According to Peanuts"

A sinful act involves worship of the wrong kind, submitting ourselves at that moment to serve the appetites of our pride or lust, and so repentance is literally a transfer of our worship back to the One who rightfully owns it.... Worship has been misunderstood as something that arises from a feeling which "comes upon you," but it is vital that we understand that it is rooted in a conscious act of the will, to serve and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. The feelings, the joy of having been forgiven, follow on as a consequence of our reunion with him. - Graham Kendrick

It seems to me that it is a minority that gets the true and full gospel. We just keep worshipping Jesus and arguing over the right way to do it. The amazing thing is that Jesus never once says "worship me!" He says, "follow me" (e.g., [Matthew 4:19](#)). Christianity is a lifestyle—a way of being in the world that is simple, non-violent, shared, and loving. However, we made it into a clever "religion," in order to avoid the lifestyle itself. One could be warlike, greedy, racist, selfish, and vain, and still believe that Jesus is their "personal Lord and Savior." The world has no time for such silliness anymore. The suffering on Earth is too great.

Richard Rohr: *Gospel Call to Compassionate Action*

In the Synoptics, Jesus' ministry lasts for less than a year and he goes up to Jerusalem only once, at the end of his ministry, for the week-long Passover festival; he is crucified on that occasion. John mentions three different annual Passover festivals (Jn. 2:13, 6:4, 11:55), indicating not only that Jesus spent more time in Jerusalem but also that his ministry lasted more than two years and perhaps as long as three. Further, in John, Jesus visits Jerusalem not only for Passover, but also for the feast of Tabernacles and Hanukkah. Smith. D. Moody. John: Historian or Theologian? *Bible Review*. 10/2004. Pg. 24.

The way: the inner driving characteristic of something. Celia Deane-Drummond. *Zygon* 12/08 Pg. 994.

"Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see a cow and to love him as they love their cow - they love their cow for the milk and cheese and profit it makes them. This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward wealth or inward

comfort. They do not rightly love God when they love him for their own advantage. Indeed, I tell you the truth, any object you have on your mind, however good, will be a barrier between you and the inmost truth." - Meister Eckhart

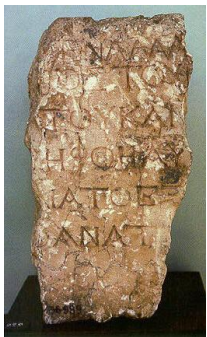
Hugo of St. Victor had an axiom, which said: "Love is the eye!" Only when we see through the prism of love do we see correctly. Admiration is part of that. When we don't admire, we aren't seeing straight, pure and simple.

When the Jews settled in Canaanite territory, the Tabernacle was made more permanent in form at Shiloh [Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31]. It was permanent enough to be called a temple, for Samuel and Eli to have rooms there, and for entrance doors to be opened and closed [1 Samuel 3:2,15]. Even after the Philistines destroyed Shiloh, captured the Ark of the Covenant, and returned it to the Jews via Beth Shemesh [1 Samuel 6:1-10] and Kiriath Jearim [2 Samuel 7:2], it was still in some kind of temporary temple [2 Samuel 6:17: 7:2] and stayed there until Solomon built a permanent temple.

Solomon's Temple followed the same general principle as the Tabernacle. It was a building in two main sections to house the Ark of the Covenant and the other holy objects such as--table, lampstand, and altar of incense. But there were differences. The whole structure was made of stone overlaid with timber and precious metals, and it was set upon a raised platform that was approached by steps. An entry porch was built onto the front of the building, and the building itself was flanked with three tiers of small rooms that could be used for storage, offices, and for personal accommodation. The Temple was twice as large as the Tabernacle, but it was not greatly impressive, being in plain stone and about one hundred feet long. More impressive were the holy objects immediately in front of the porch.

The porch itself was entered between two freestanding pillars that were given the names Jacin and Boaz. In front of the porch was a huge laver supported on the backs of twelve bronze bulls and holding ten thousand gallons of water. Also in front of the porch was a great three-tiered altar that acted as an incinerator for sacrifices. It was about fifteen feet high. This temple, too, was placed in a large courtyard. The main courtyard of the Temple eventually was divided by a "wall of the inner court of the sanctuary"

Ralph Gower. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, PP 341-45.



The pilgrims in Jerusalem must have understood Jesus' overturning of the seats of the pigeon sellers (Mk. 11:15; Mt. 21:12) and his driving out the sheep, oxen and pigeons together with the salesman and money changers (Jn. 2:14-15), for they acquiesced to it, and the Temple security forces did not dare to arrest Jesus on the spot. Rabbi H. D Uriel Smith. *Was Jesus' Purging of the Temple Marketplace Incomprehensible?* Bible Review, April 1991, Page 6.

Keep out! The Greek inscription on this slab of hard limestone warns foreigners (non-Jews) not to enter the sacred inner precinct of the Temple Mount. According to this first-century CE Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, similar warnings, "some in Greek, others in Latin," were posted "at regular intervals" along the *soreg*, the stone balustrade that bounded the sacred precinct. The partial inscription on this fragment, in Jerusalem's Rockefeller Museum, has been reconstructed based on a more complete version, now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, which reads: "No foreigner may enter within the railing and enclosure that surround the Temple. Anyone apprehended shall have himself to blame for his consequent death!"

Biblical Archaeology Review: Sept. Oct. 1999. Pg. 60. Sacred Geometry: [Unlocking the Secret of the Temple Mount](#). David Jacobson.

The Peace of Christ, then, has an inner and an outer manifestation. Exteriorly it manifests a fire, as zeal, as transformation, as death and rebirth. Interiorly it manifests as silence, as knowledge, as joy, as union with the Beloved: a joy of union that is capable of communicating itself to others. This is the real key to the early spread of the Christian faith. Here is the secret of the paradoxical peace of the true Disciple: "not an amalgam or a compromise, but both things at the top of their energy; love and wrath both burning." We see it at work in Jesus himself when he drives the moneychangers, the traders and their cattle out of the Temple (e.g. Jn. 2:13-17). This is passion, the passion of a lover who is jealous for the honor of his beloved. "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Mt. 4:10). With these words, and with all thereby of transformed Eros, we too may expel the traders and beasts from the Temple of the heart. Caldecott, Stratford. *Zeal in Detachment: The Paradox of Peace in Christianity*. [Parabola](#). Fall 1996. Pages 48ff.

For what is prayer but the summary posture of those who foreswear the idolatry of self-reliance and affirm rather the perfection, primacy, and power of God. Alan Lewis

"Prayer is a death to every identity that does not come from God. And this is why prayer frees us and restores us to ourselves. In prayer, we learn from God how to release those who, thorough the cult of myth and symbol and tradition, represent the world standing before us as the sole source of our identity. And in prayer we learn as well to love them with a pure heart."

James Finley, "Merton's Palace of Nowhere"

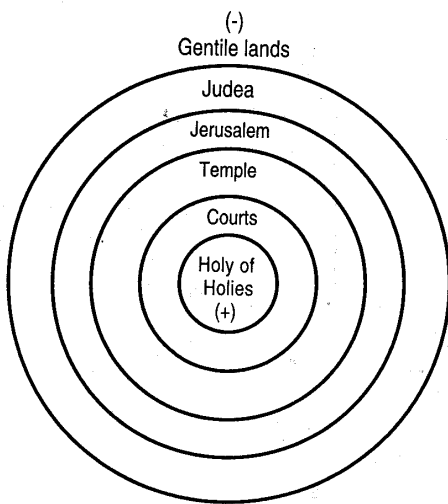
Jesus enters the temple and drives out the dealers who are trying to buy and sell worthiness and access ([Luke 19:45-46](#)), which is the great temptation of all religion. He symbolically dismantles the system. The temple of religion (read "church" or "mosque" too) is henceforth to become personal, relational, embodied in people, and not a physical building. He came to say that God is available everywhere, and for some reason we like to keep God "elsewhere," where we can control God by our theologies and services.

Richard Rohr

Jn. 2: 13–25: Jesus’ sign of authority over the Temple (see Mt 21.17; Mk 11.15–19; Lk 9.45–48). In the other Gospels, this incident occurs at the end of Jesus’ ministry; in John it is, in effect, his inaugural public appearance. 13: Passover, the week-long spring festival celebrating the Exodus from Egypt and the barley harvest (Ex 12.1–18). Passover is closely associated with liberation from oppression and divine salvation, past and future. Of the Jews, a redundancy that may indicate the lack of acquaintance with Judaism on the part of at least some members of John’s audience. 14: Animals (unblemished and therefore acceptable for sacrifice) were sold at the Temple, and foreign currencies had to be exchanged for the official half-shekel for the Temple tax (Ex 30.11–16). 17: Ps 69.9; see Zech 14.21; Mal 3.1. 18: The Jews, here, Temple authorities. What sign . . . , may be a challenge to Jesus’ authority. 19: Destroy this temple . . . , alludes to the tradition of Temple critique (4.21; see Jer 7.1–15; Ezek 10.18–19; Acts 7.48) and continues the theme of Jesus’ authority over the Temple. 20: Forty-six years, according to Josephus, (Ant. 15.11.1) construction began in the eighteenth year of the rule of Herod the Great (20/19 bce) and concluded under Herod Agrippa II in 64 ce. 22: The word, Jesus’ own prophecies are treated as of equal authority to scripture. 23: His name, the expression of his true being and power. 24: Entrust himself, rely upon others to vouch for his authority. 25: Needed no one to testify, forensic (courtroom) language evokes the theme of God as judge. He himself knew, Jesus’ foreknowledge appears first with Nathanael (1.48; cf. 4.17–18; 6.70). Pgs. 161-2. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

My most spectacular answers to prayers have come when I was so helpless, so out of control as to be able to do nothing at all for myself. Catherine Marshall

The religious imagination of the day had fenced the world of Judaism off into ritual zones, ordering all areas of Jewish life. ..the



ranking of persons according to holiness has to do with one’s standing in relation to the temple. When holiness is defined as purity, the threat of contamination is one of radical blight, insofar as it involves the very root and foundation of ordered existence. In the healings we witness a competition of power over the unclean, with Jesus winning the contest. Social orders, reinforced by ritual, protect us from pollution and contamination by guarding the gates in the walls between zones...the unclean is posed as an opposite to holiness, and not simply to cleanliness. Beck, Fr. Robert. *Nonviolent Story*. NY. Maryknoll. 1996. Pgs. 65ff.

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one’s weakness....And so, it is better in prayer to have a heart without words and words without a heart. Gandhi

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site:

www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015*. Pgs. 53-57. To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009* Pg. 69-73.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005* Pgs. 63-67.

Bahat, Dan. [Jerusalem Down Under: Tunneling Along Herod’s Temple Mount Wall](#). *Biblical Archaeological Review*. Nov. Dec. 1995. Pages 31 ff. A good article for information about the temple.