

February 24, 2008 – Third Sunday of Lent
Jesus, In Every Way Like Us
Part 4: “Ever Have To Stand Up For What Is Right?”
John 2:13-22 NLT

It was time for the annual Passover celebration, and Jesus went to Jerusalem. 14 In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; and he saw money changers behind their counters. 15 Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and oxen, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. 16 Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Don't turn my Father's house into a marketplace!"

17 Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house burns within me."

18 "What right do you have to do these things?" the Jewish leaders demanded. "If you have this authority from God, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

19 "All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 "What!" they exclaimed. "It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can do it in three days?" 21 But by "this temple," Jesus meant his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, the disciples remembered that he had said this. And they believed both Jesus and the Scriptures.

It was the time of the annual Passover celebration. Every Jewish male was expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during this time (Deut 16:16 NLT - "Each year every man in Israel must celebrate these three festivals: the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. They must appear before the LORD your God at the place he chooses on each of these occasions, and they must bring a gift to the LORD.""). This was a week-long festival - the Passover was one day, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted the rest of the week. Verse 13 in some Bible versions refer to the "Jewish" Passover (NIV) or The Passover of the Jews (NKJV). Perhaps John referred to it this way to compare it with Jesus Who has become our (the Christian) Passover (1 Cor 5:7 NLT "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us."). Just as the Passover celebration that took place yearly at the temple in Jerusalem was a to remember when the blood of a lamb was applied to the door frames of the Jews in order to save them, and to commemorate the freeing of the Jews from slavery in Egypt (Ex 12:1-14), so now the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God is applied to our hearts to save us, and free us from the slavery of sin. Or perhaps John referred to it as the Passover of the Jews because it had become just a ceremonial holiday, much like some people today might celebrate Easter or Christmas. It was not recognized as a spiritual reality. They no longer recognized God's place in the holy day, it just became a holiday, a custom. And so John refers to it this way as a way of introduction to the incident that happened there with Jesus.

In the temple courts Jesus found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. God had originally instructed the people of Israel to bring from their own flocks the best animals for sacrifice (Deut 12:5-7). This would make the sacrifice more personal. However, some people had to travel long distances to come to the temple for Passover, and it would be difficult to bring their sacrificial animals with them, so animals for the sacrifice were made available for them when they arrived in Jerusalem. As usually happens, what started out with good intentions, became corrupt. It probably started with markets along the road coming into Jerusalem and gradually the temple priests saw an opportunity to make a profit and so opened markets for this right in the temple court, where it took the very place of worship. Not only that, but, in the temple the price for these animals was much higher than elsewhere. The merchants and money changers were dishonest, and expected to turn large profits. The money changers were there to exchange foreign money to local currency which would be needed in the temple. Again, large profits were made by charging exorbitant exchange rates. Jesus was angry at the dishonest, greedy practices of the money changers and merchants, and He particularly disliked their presence on the temple grounds. They were making a mockery of God's house of worship. They had set up shop in the Court of the Gentiles, making it so full of merchants that foreigners found it difficult to worship - and worship was the main purpose for visiting the temple. With all the merchandising taking place in the area allotted for the Gentiles, how could they spend time with God in prayer? No wonder Jesus was angry!

And His reaction to what was going on was deliberate and forceful. Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He did not use the whip on people, He used it to drive out the sheep and oxen. He turned over tables and scattered the money changers' coins over the ground, because God is from above, money is from the earth, so that is where it is scattered. You can't serve both God and money. Then, notice, He went over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Sheep and oxen could be gathered once they were driven out, but doves could fly off, so He doesn't let that happen, rather He tells those selling the doves to get them out of His Father's House, and don't turn my Father's house into a marketplace!"

Jesus did not lose His temper, He was obviously angry at the merchants who exploited those who had come to God's house to worship. His action expressed anger, but he was clearly in control of Himself. Jesus was passionate for the reverence due to God the Father. There is a difference between uncontrolled rage and righteous anger - yet both are called anger. We must be very careful how we use the powerful emotion of anger. We get angry when our pride is hurt, We get angry when we have been disrespected, We get angry when someone has been acknowledged over us, We get angry when others are not cooperating with us so that we can't get our way, We get angry when we get jealous of what others have or have done, we get angry when our wrong actions are confronted and exposed. But, we also get angry at injustice and evil. We can be angry and not sin. We should be angry at sin. It is not appropriate or necessary to sin when we are angry. It is not only appropriate, but necessary to be angry at sin. It is right to be angry about injustice and sin; it is wrong to be angry over trivial personal offenses. Anger is not sin.

The Temple was for the worship of God. Worship is not worship if we are not focused on God. Just showing up at church does not mean you are worshipping God. Just as the merchants were not worshipping God and were keeping the Gentiles for worshipping God. To worship you must focus on God. Jesus wanted to purge from the temple those things that did not belong there Malachi prophesied about this: (Mal 3:1-3 NLT) "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD Almighty. 2 "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes. 3 He will sit and judge like a refiner of silver, watching closely as the dross is burned away. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold or silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD."

Ever have to make a stand for what is right, even though you knew you would be persecuted, or mocked for it... So did Jesus!. He was even put to death for saying and making a stand for what was right and true.

(v17) Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house burns within me." This quote from Ps 69:9 was thought to refer not only to the psalmist but also to the coming Messiah. "Passion for God's house burns within Me."

The Jewish leaders demanded that Jesus answer this question: "What right do you have to do these things?" They said, "If you have this authority from God, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."

"All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

"What!" they exclaimed. "It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can do it in three days?" But (we are told in v21) by "this temple," Jesus meant His body. After He was raised from the dead, the disciples remembered that he had said this. And they believed both Jesus and the Scriptures.

Jesus refers to His body as a temple. Do you know who else is referred to as the Temple of God in Scripture?

(1 Cor 3:16 THE MESSAGE) You realize, don't you, that you are the temple of God, and God himself is present in you?

(1 Cor 6:19 AMP) Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God?

Jesus has a passion to purge or cleanse your heart to make it a holy temple for God. (Mal 3: 2-3) "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes. He will sit and judge like a refiner of silver,

watching closely as the dross is burned away. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold or silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD.”

In certain parts of the world you can still see the silversmith at work, a refiner of silver. He watches closely as he heats up the silver. The heat brings the dross or the impurities to the surface. He takes away the dross. And if you were to ask him, “What are you waiting to see?” He would say, “I keep it on the fire until there is no more impurities” And if you were to ask him how he would know the silver is refined, he’d say, “when I lean over it, I can see myself reflected as in the best mirror.” That is what Malachi means when he talks about God sitting as a refiner of silver. God has to heat up things in our lives to bring our impurities to the surface. And He will keep doing this until He can see Himself in us.

What needs to be cleansed from our life? What needs to be purged from your heart that it may be a Holy place, a sacred place, a temple for God? When we put our faith in Jesus He cleanses our hearts and comes to live in us by the Holy Spirit. God’s spirit is given to us as a gift. We have become the temple or the house of God...He lives in us by the Holy Spirit. Did you hear that? You are the house of God. You are the temple of God. God the Holy Spirit lives in you. Not only does He live in you, He wants to live through you, so that you, like Jesus, may stand for what is right and just. Are you staying close to God or is there some obstacle that needs to be driven out? I have been to areas that overlook the ocean. You can see sailboats without their sails, just their mast and they sit bobbing in the water, they are not going anywhere. But there are other sailboats, with sails open to the wind, moving as the sails catch the wind. Are you catching the wind of the Holy Spirit and letting Him move you? You are called to pattern your life after Jesus. Therefore, your most important task is to study and meditate on the life of Jesus, letting Him remove the impurities, cleansing your heart, removing the weights that hold you back, and driving out all obstacles, that you might live and be like Him. You must stay close to Jesus that your heart may be a place where God alone is worshipped.