

Chris Murphy

June 28th

Scripture: John 2: 13-22

Sermon Title: Jesus Cleansing of the Temple

John 2:13-22

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

13 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, with 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.

This is the Word of the Lord

Prayer...

Whenever I read the story of Jesus Cleansing the Temple, I experience the same memory. When I was 25, I spent a year in Tulsa, Oklahoma participating in a group called In Ministry Training or IMT for short. We were a group of 20 young adults, 18-29 year olds serving in a ministry that supported a large Charismatic mega church called Victory Christian Center. Within the group was a young man named JJ. JJ was 20 years old and he was a firecracker

personality. He was a former athlete with a radical conversion story. He was a great evangelist and believed strongly in fervent prayer and radical ministry for Christ. JJ and I became close friends, but one day we got in this heated debate. I wanted to communicate that I thought Jesus was best understood for his gentle heart of compassion and that he was nonviolent. JJ wanted to say that Jesus was intense and fierce and was a prophetic leader that might even have knocked over a few people when he turned over the money tables in the temple. This fiery Jesus was someone that JJ admired and emulated. Over the course of the year together, JJ and I rubbed off on each other. I saw his point that Jesus in his prophetic witness could have been more intense than I feel comfortable with at times, and I think JJ maybe came to understand the gentler aspects of Jesus. Together, JJ and I became more like Christ that year as we spread the Gospel, studied the Bible, and worked for peace and justice through urban and cross-cultural ministry opportunities. We witnessed many people become Christians, physical and emotional

healings, and the power of prayer to change lives. We also got to share our testimonies and preach of God's loving power.

As we look at the story of Jesus Cleansing the Temple, I want to give a little background on what the Gospel writer John is highlighting in the story.

First, a student of the Gospels will notice that the story of Jesus Cleansing the Temple is in all four gospels, but in Matthew, Mark, and Luke the story takes place at the end of Jesus' ministry. In John's Gospel it happens early in Jesus' ministry. Scholars suggest that John chooses to place the story early in his writing of the ministry experience of Jesus to highlight for theological reasons that Jesus faced conflict throughout his ministry.

Jesus showing anger at the selling of animals and the collecting of money in the temple parallels Old Testament Scriptures that highlight that God desires the Temple to be a sacred Holy place. One example that the disciples remember is from Psalm 69, where a

Psalm dedicated to David says, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

Jesus is angry because he believes as a Jewish rabbi and as the Son of God, the Messiah that the Temple must remain a Sacred place not corrupted by greed and consumerism.

Another spiritual focus of this story is that when Jesus talks about the temple being destroyed and raised up, he is referring to his own body dying and being resurrected. Here, the writer John wishes to emphasize that Jesus is the true temple. This is part of the basis why Christians focus less on earthly temples or churches as the primary holy places, since the presence of Christ, the true temple of God can be found everywhere.

Later in the New Testament with Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, we followers of Jesus are reminded that our bodies are also temples of God. Our bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

I want to share two personal takeaways from this story that I hope will support us.

First, in a simple but profound way in this story, we see Jesus comfortable in his own anger. Yes, the anger of Jesus makes me personally a bit uncomfortable, but the wisdom of my friend JJ is that we must also respect that Jesus got angry about injustice and in this case the corruption of the temple. I think it is good for us to remember that because of God's heart for justice God does get angry. God is especially angry when the poor are mistreated and the powerful oppress the weak. God's anger and Jesus' anger here is justified.

I have struggled personally in my life with my own feelings of anger at times. Anger according to various writers on emotions, such as Brene Brown, is a sign that a boundary has been crossed that needs your protection. Anger is not a bad emotion. It is an important

feeling that alerts you to providing protection for yourself and what you value.

In her book, *Wellbeing Rituals*, Science backed practices for healing and Living, Koya Webb shares about her journey to befriend her emotions. She shares about an experience with anger. Koya writes...

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I think Koya does a nice job in sharing her story and she reminds us that anger is a messenger to remind us to show respect for ourselves and what we need.

The key in Koya's story is that she also found a productive way to engage her anger. She saw it as a messenger. She did not stuff her anger, but she models in her story how to listen to anger and address the deeper purpose for why it is surfacing. She befriended her anger.

Jesus in our story, is righteously feeling anger because of the corruption of the temple. I still am a little uncomfortable that he was

so physical in turning over the money changer tables, but this story does invite me to at least acknowledge that anger in response to injustice or corruption makes sense.

In our own lives, let us also remember that anger is often a secondary emotion. Anger usually is often for me the result of a deeper sadness in my life.

As I listen to my feelings of sadness and process them, like Koya suggests in her book, I find my anger starts to relax and I find more peace from God.

So one takeaway from this story is to use it to explore your own relationship with your emotions and especially your relationship with anger. This story shows even Jesus got angry sometimes.

Another takeaway for me in this story is this idea that Jesus is the true temple and therefore we also can see our bodies as the temple

of the Holy Spirit. Do you see your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

In our story today, Jesus cleanses the Jewish temple. I wonder whether this story might inspire us to take care of our own earthly temples, our bodies. We are the Body of Christ as the Church and we each have earthy bodies that house the presence of the Holy Spirit, but it is hard for us sometimes to care for our temples, our bodies.

Sometimes Christianity emphasizes the spiritual in a way that actually ignores the body, but we are to see our spiritual lives as deeply connected to our physical bodies. What we eat and drink, how we sleep, how we exercise, the movies or shows we watch, the books we read, the social media we consume. All of these things shape our earthly temples, which include our brains and mental health.

Caring for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit will often invite us to connect deeply to nature. I often remind us of waking in nature or grounding in nature by putting our bare feet in the grass. These physical practices have deep spiritual benefits. Taking care of our earthly temples, our bodies will help us experience nervous system regulation.

One of my dreams for our church, especially through the influence of our Peace Garden and our ministry called the Newberg Center for Christian Spirituality is that we will eventually embody in some ways a Christian Wellness Center. I desire that our journey together as a Christian community will help us live wholistic lives that include care for our bodies through good eating, good rest, personal prayer, connection to nature, and a whole bunch of other spiritual practices. Maybe, Lory Albright will bring back her yoga class or we can lead retreats that include prayer and meditation exercises, maybe we can invite a professional masseuse to come and do

shoulder massages as we spend a day in prayer and walk out into our Peace Garden.

What if churches felt a little bit like Christian Wellness Centers, I think we might live more wholistic lives of greater health.

So your second takeaway is to see the Story of Jesus Cleansing the temple as an invitation to care for your own temple, your own body that houses the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, it is good to journey through John's Gospel together. May we learn from Jesus' Cleansing of the temple. May it remind us of Jesus' heart for justice, our own need to befriend our emotions, and the beauty of caring for our earthly temples, our human bodies that house the Holy Spirit of God.

AMEN.