

introduction

Our discussion last week focused on John 2:1-11 where Jesus revealed his glory by providing an abundance of wine at a wedding feast. In our passage today, we see Jesus entering the public, known as the religious center of Israel during Passover. The setting shifts dramatically between the two scenes — from celebration to confrontation, from private joy to public disruption. What unfolds in the temple courts is not a loss of composure, but Jesus' deliberate act that exposes what has gone wrong at the very heart of Israel's worship. Let's consider together what we might be invited to see about God's honor, the nature of true worship, and the identity of Jesus himself.



Can you share a time when a conviction or a cause inspired you to act with passion? What motivated that response?

read

John 2:13-25 (NIV)

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

²⁰ They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² 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.

²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. ²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.

a zeal that consumes

When Jesus enters the temple courts, he encounters a scene that, on the surface, seems practical and even necessary. Many worshippers who were traveling and making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover were required to offer sacrifices. But it was impractical for them to travel and bring along their sacrifices on their long journeys. As animals for sacrifice were the proper tender for pilgrims to pay the temple tax, practical and convenient systems had been put in place to meet those needs. But these activities were taking place in the court of the Gentiles — the very space designated for the nation/people to draw near to Israel’s God. What should have been a place of prayer and reverent approach had instead become crowded with commerce and noise. The impact of this disorder was not merely economic; it was also spiritual and relational. The one thing the temple existed for — undistracted worship — had been displaced. Space intended for the outsider had been overtaken, and access to God had been obscured.

Jesus’ response is striking. He fashions a whip, overturns tables, and drives out the animals, declaring, “Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” (v. 16). This is not Jesus reacting impulsively, throwing a tantrum, or breaking out into an uncontrollable outburst of spontaneous anger. John presents this moment as Jesus’ prophetic act, rich with symbolism, calling God’s people back to true worship that flows from the heart rather than convenience or profit. Importantly, Jesus’ objection is not first and foremost about dishonest business practices, but about the presence of business itself in God’s house.¹ What provokes Jesus’ anger is reducing worship into an act of transaction — and the subtle replacement of love for God with love for gain. Jesus’ zeal is fueled by a fierce commitment to his Father’s honor: God is not a means to something else; he is the supreme treasure.²

¹ Phillips, Richard D., *John in Reformed Expository Commentary*, P&R Publishing, 2014.

² Bruner, Frederick Dale, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Eerdmans, 2011.

Later, the disciples recognize that Jesus' actions fulfill Scripture: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Psalm 69.9). This zeal doesn't merely energize Jesus — it will cost him everything.³ His passion for pure worship places him on a collision course with the religious authorities and foreshadows the opposition that will lead to his death. One commentator highlights that what John wants us to see in Jesus' cleansing of the temple is not the work of a reformer tidying up religious excess, but the action of the Messiah who loves God's glory and honor so deeply that he is willing to be consumed by it.⁴ Even now, such zeal unsettles comfortable religion, exposes hidden allegiances, and calls worshippers back to a singular devotion: that God himself would be loved, honored, and treasured above all else.

discuss

- 1. When you first read this passage, do you instinctively interpret Jesus' actions as an angry outburst or as purposeful zeal? How is today's discussion challenging or reshaping your views?**
- 2. Jesus' zeal to "cleanse the temple" flows from love for his Father and concern for true worship. In what ways might "clutter" in your life — sin, distractions, unhealthy habits, or misplaced priorities — be keeping you from true worship? How can you intentionally create space for God in those areas?**
- 3. When you sit with this picture of Jesus — his zeal, authority, and devotion to God — what stands out to you most? What response, if any, does this stir or awaken in you?**

Jesus as the new temple

Jesus' action in the temple immediately provokes a challenge from the religious leaders, as they demand a sign to justify his authority (v. 18). Their question reveals more than curiosity. Their concern is less about the purity of worship and more about precedent and authority.⁵ In

³ Carson, D.A., *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, Eerdmans, 1990.

⁴ Hoskyns, cited by Leon Morris in *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, Eerdmans, 1995.

⁵ Carson, D.A., *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, Eerdmans, 1990.

other words, rather than asking whether Jesus is right, they ask whether he is authorized. In doing so, they attempt to turn a spiritual confrontation into a procedural one — shifting the focus from repentance to proof.

Jesus answers their question and responds with a sign — but not on their terms, and certainly not one that can be staged or domesticated.⁶ At one level, Jesus' words, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (v. 19), sounds implausible, even offensive. The temple has taken decades to construct; the suggestion that it could be rebuilt in days borders on absurdity. Yet Jesus is offering precisely the kind of sign they demand — one that would unmistakably establish authority. But John tells us that Jesus is speaking about his body. In doing so, Jesus makes a staggering claim: the true meeting place between God and humanity is no longer a building, but a person.⁷ The dwelling of God's presence is no longer housed in stone and ritual, but in the crucified and risen Son. His death will be the final sacrifice; his resurrection will be the rebuilding of God's dwelling place. What the temple pointed toward all along — access to God, atonement for sin, and restored communion — comes to completion in Jesus himself. To encounter Jesus, then, is to encounter the very presence of God.

discuss

- 4. Jesus says that he himself is the new temple — the true place where God is most fully present and accessible — where we meet God. What difference does that make for you?**
- 5. As discussed earlier, cleansing the temple in your own life (removing distractions, turning from sin, realigning misplaced priorities) can help you sense God's presence more deeply. As you grow in God's presence, what specific ways could you demonstrate or share that presence with your family, friends, or coworkers this week?**

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

upcoming

- Sunday, January 25 | **Membership Class, 1:15-2:30 pm**
This is a pre-requisite class for becoming a church member. This class is strongly encouraged of anyone who considers RWS as their “home church.”
redeemerws.com/membership
- Thursday, January 29 | **Young Adults Winter Ball, 7-9 pm at RES (150 E 91st St)**
It's a 1920s themed party, complete with swing dancing lessons, dinner, drinks and prizes for best dressed! Bring a friend and get ready to groove. Register by January 22.
eastside.redeemer.com/ball
- Saturday, February 7 | **Community Salsa Night (18+), 7-9:30 pm**
Sign up on your own or with some friends for an evening of rhythm, music and community. A 90-minute intro to the Chachacha will be provided to help you dance the night away!
redeemerws.com/salsa
- Wednesdays, starting February 11 | **CFW Vocation Lab, 7pm at RES (150 E 91st St)**
Participate in a 5 week class designed to help you discern God's will for your vocational calling and gain clarity in how your work fits into God's purposes.
faithandwork.com/vocationlab