



The Cleansing of the Temple

Message Notes, March 20, 2016

John 2:13-22

When Jesus cleansed the temple, He was angry! Really angry. It was not an impulsive loss of temper. He came into the temple, his Father's house, and found it corrupted by commerce. "Zeal for his Father's house consumed him," so he methodically fashioned a whip from cords, forcefully drove out the animals, overturned the tables and screamed – "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market."

Try to envision this scene – is it uncomfortable for you? Jesus whipping, overturning, screaming in a rage of righteous anger ... What does this scene stir in you?

These services of providing animals for sacrifice and exchanging money were necessary for those coming to Jerusalem for the annual Passover. So many were coming long distances that did not allow them to bring the required sacrificial animals. Also, they only had their own foreign currency, but only one Jewish currency was allowed in the temple, so money exchange was essential.

It was not that these services were inherently evil; the priests simply had allowed them to go too far. These "stations" had come into the temple, where they were encroaching on the court of worship (for Gentiles) and the place of worship preparation (for the Jews). Worship was being corrupted by commerce. Convenience usurped true sacrifice. Ritual processes were more important than genuine worship. It was a blatant compromise of Holiness. Yahweh, the Holy One, deserves much better!

How does Isaiah 29:13 capture this "corrupted worship"?

Many may have missed the meaning and rightness of Jesus' anger, but his disciples recognized his righteous zeal as expressed in Psalm 69:9, and John quotes this in his account (John 2:17).

"Zeal" comes from the same root word as "jealous." True (healthy) jealousy is rooted not in insecurity or arrogance, but in passionate love. We react strongly, passionately, if something comes between us and our loved one precisely because we love them.

God's wrath, while fierce, is rooted in His passionate, jealous love for His people. Jesus' zealous anger is two-fold:

1. He is zealous for His Father – to proclaim and redeem Father's holy, majestic Glory, the one worthy of pure, uncorrupted, passionate love and worship.
2. He is zealous for true, authentic worship – not empty ritual, but whole-life worship. (Not just a weekly service, but worship that fuels every aspect of our lives, 24/7.)

Worship goes beyond the temple, beyond corporate services.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Romans 12:1-2. How do these two verses speak about this call to "whole-life" worship?



What compromising, corrupting things might Jesus desire to “drive out of *your* temple/life?

For some, Jesus righteous anger seems inappropriate. Maybe they have a cheap view of grace or maybe they don’t grasp the gravity of sin in our post-modern age of moral relativism. These need the balancing perspective that God is indeed Holy and Majestic, worthy of our humble praise, reverence and awe.

Others only see God as the angry Holy One, scrutinizing us for obedience, waiting to reprimand us in our failures, leading us to think, “I can never be good enough.” These need the freeing perspective of His perfect, unconditional love that casts out fear and invites us, by grace, to be eternal sons and daughters.

God loves us. He is jealous for us to stay true to Him because HE IS LIFE! He hates sin because it robs of us of His life for us.

The religious Jews did not so much react to Jesus’ cleansing act. At some level, they knew He was right – that things had gotten out of hand. Their real issue was, “Who are *you* to be doing the cleansing? By what sign/authority?”

Jesus expressed His authority boldly: “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

He was not giving a “sign” as much as a “hint” – the temple he was referring to was not the massive one of stone, but rather His own body. He was foretelling His own death and resurrection. This would be the evidence of his authority. This would prove His Messiah-ship!

His resurrection was not really a “re-building” of the temple, but a “replacing”!

His death would rend in two the separating curtain in the Holy of Holies.

His death would be the final sacrifice.

The old sacrificial system would become obsolete.

The temple would no longer be necessary. (Again see 1 Corinthians 6:19 – our bodies/lives are now the Temple of his Holy Spirit.)

Forgiveness, redemption, life and hope are now found in Him, His death and resurrection.

We are an Easter people and Hallelujah is our song!

Reflection Questions

1. Do you think the church has become too familiar with God and has lost a healthy sense of awe?
2. What about you personally?
3. How might we recover a healthy reverence for His glory?
4. Does fear dominate your posture before God? What would help you embrace more fully His deep, passionate, personal love for you?