

## Zeal for His Father's House

John 2:13-17

Last Sunday was what we call "epiphany Sunday" on the yearly church calendar, the Sunday closest to Jan. 6, the traditional day the church in some of its branches has celebrated epiphany. The word "epiphany" means "appearing" or "manifestation" or "revelation."

It is actually a word used in bible. We read in 2 Tim 1:10 of our salvation in Jesus which **"...now has *been manifested through the appearing [epiphany] of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...*** Here the reference is to Christ's first coming.

1 Tim. 6:14 - ***keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing [epiphany] of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Here the reference is to Christ's second coming.

Last Sunday we studied the great epiphany event of Jesus' baptism, how this revealed him to be the Son of God his Father. We looked at the account in Mark 1:11-13.

But today I want us to consider another manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ of God, in the incident found in three of the gospels, his cleansing of the Temple. We will study the account in John 2:13:17. Let us read:

*<sup>13</sup> The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. <sup>15</sup> And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."*

Let us pray:

Holy and Gracious God, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we come with thanksgiving today for the great treasure and revelation of your Word, for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Open up to us now this portion of your Word and teach of our Lord's zeal for his Father's house, we pray. Amen.

In order to help us get ahold of what's happening here I want to talk about it in four sections:

### **I. The Disturbing Practice**

## II. The Decisive Action

### III. The Devoted Son

### IV. The Devout Worshipper

Throughout this passage there is one truth that stands out loud and clear: *Jesus was Consumed with Zeal for his Father's house.*

So let's think about what was going on here: the historical incident. We see that there was

#### I. The Disturbing Practice

We see in v. 13 that this was the time of the Jewish Passover: this was the time of year in the spring of the year when the Hebrews remembered their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. They had a ritual which they recalled that night when God told them to take a lamb into their households and keep it for four days and then slaughter it and put the blood on the doorposts of their house and when the death angels passed throughout the land of Egypt killing the first born child in every household he would not enter the households of the Jews. He passed over them.

So this Passover celebration was one of the 3 great yearly religious festivals of the Jews when the people went to Jerusalem and joined together in this celebration. This is why Jesus was in Jerusalem and the occasion for him going into the temple.

But when he went into the Temple he was very disturbed by what he saw. He was disturbed *because he was Consumed with Zeal for his Father's house.*

The Temple compound was a large building that had four courtyards:

The courtyard of the priests in the inner area.

The courtyard of the men or the Hebrews.

The courtyard of the women.

The courtyard of the Gentiles – this was an outer courtyard that went all around the temple grounds. In the first three courtyards, only Jews could enter; no non-Jews, ie, Gentiles, were allowed. Those who wanted to worship Yahweh could come there and pray. We read in Isaiah 56:6-7

<sup>6</sup> "And <sup>o</sup>the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,  
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,  
and to be his servants,  
everyone <sup>o</sup>who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,  
and holds fast my covenant—

<sup>7</sup> <sup>o</sup>these I will bring to <sup>o</sup>my holy mountain,  
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;  
<sup>o</sup>their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

*will be accepted on my altar;  
for <sup>(N)</sup>my house shall be called a house of prayer  
for all peoples."*

So provision had been made for a place within the temple where Gentiles could come and pray and worship Yahweh, the God of the Jews whom they had adopted as their own God. In fact, we read in John 12:20:

*<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."*

Yet when Jesus and every other worshipper passed through the outer court, the court of the Gentiles, what did he see and hear and smell? He heard the mooing of cattle, and the bleating of sheep, and the cooing of pigeons. He not only saw all these animals, and heard them, but he smelled their manure and probably had to avoid stepping in it!

Besides that, he heard tingling noises, and saw money booths everywhere: money booths had been set up and there was a great deal of money exchange going on. Why was this? It was because all the males above age 20 were required to pay a half-shekel temple tax every year. It was a form of redemption. It paid for their right to be sons of the covenant.

But people came from all over the empire and they had different kinds of money, but only a certain type was allowed for payment of the temple tax, so they would exchange their coins and get the proper temple money and had to pay a fee to make the exchange. This was a very big operation. There were tens of thousands of people who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

Now the worshippers would want to bring animals to the temple to be sacrificed as offerings, payment, to cover their sins. So if you were coming from Nazareth, for example, a distance of about 70 miles, it would be difficult to carry a sheep or lamb or oxen that far. So provision was made that worshippers could purchase their sacrificial animals once they got to Jerusalem.

So the purchase of such sacrificial animals for worship in the temple was legitimate, the problem was the place where these transactions were taking place. It was not wrong, in fact, it was right to exchange your Roman coins for temple money. The problem was the place where the transaction happened. All this buying and selling of animals and exchanging of money should have happened outside the temple courtyards, not in the courtyard, not in the first courtyard that one passed through, the courtyard of the Gentiles.

How could a Gentile pray and worship God with all this commotion going on? Could he even find a clean place to kneel down? Could he even hear himself think among all the noise of the animals and the money exchange going on?

When Jesus saw this, it was very disturbing. No doubt he had seen this before on his previous trips to Jerusalem for worship, but now he had been baptized by John, anointed with the Spirit,

and his public ministry had begun. When he entered the courtyard this time, he carried with him the anointed authority of the Son of God and his reaction befitted the Son of God who had come into his Father's house. He reacted with indignation, with anger. He saw the worship of the Gentiles being disrupted by the corruption of greedy people wanting to profit off the worshippers coming to Jerusalem. The Worship of Yahweh was being trampled under the feet of profiteers. Money was in their thoughts, not God. The holy had been replaced with the profane. The sacred with the secular. The eternal things with the temporary and passing things. The short-term goals of money and profit had tossed aside the long-term goals, the eternal goals, of worshipping Yahweh, the one true God.

## **II. The Decisive Action**

**Jesus took decisive action because Zeal for his Father's house consumed him.**

<sup>15</sup> And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Jesus' actions may seem radical but he was in the tradition of some of the prophets.

The nature and depth of Jesus' zeal to protect worshippers from those who would interfere or deny their access can be seen in the OT example of the priest of Israel named Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, the brother of Moses.

[read Numbers 25].

We can see in this incident that those who had departed their relationship with Yahweh and embraced the pagan god Baal, motivated by their desire to have sex with the Moabite women worshippers of Baal, was such an offense and abomination to Yahweh that he sent a plague on the nation. He told Moses to execute capital punishment on those when who were doing this.

When Phinehas saw an Israeli man take a Moabite woman into the tent of meeting, the holy tabernacle, to have sex with her, he took up and spear and entered the tent and thrust it through both of them at once. Moses commended him "...that he <sup>was</sup> was jealous with my jealousy among them..."

This is the kind of zeal that Jesus had, jealousy for the protection of the worship of those who had the right to worship Yahweh. He was the anointed Son of God, anointed with authority to act as incarnate God. He did this because **zeal for his Father's house consumed him.**

**The Disturbing Practice**

**The Decisive Action**

**The Devoted Son**

***16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."***

Notice that Jesus called the temple his "Father's house." He didn't call it "our father's house. Jesus used the term "my Father "

The first time we hear Jesus use this term was in Luke 2:49 -***And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"***

***He uses this term "my Father" more than 40 times in John's gospel.***

### ***John 5:17ff***

<sup>7</sup> But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

<sup>18</sup> This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Remember in Garden he told Mary.....

**I. The Disturbing Practice**

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**IV. The Devout Worshipper**

*"<sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."*

**To the choirmaster: according to <sup>♬</sup>Lilies. Of David.**

**69** Save me, O God!

For <sup>Ⓜ</sup>the waters have come up to my neck.<sup>Ⓜ</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I sink in deep <sup>Ⓜ</sup>mire,

where there is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters,

and the flood <sup>Ⓜ</sup>sweeps over me.

<sup>3</sup> <sup>Ⓜ</sup>I am weary with my crying out;

<sup>Ⓜ</sup>my throat is parched.

<sup>Ⓜ</sup>My eyes grow dim

with <sup>Ⓜ</sup>waiting for my God.

<sup>4</sup> <sup>Ⓜ</sup>More in number than the hairs of my head

are <sup>Ⓜ</sup>those who hate me <sup>Ⓜ</sup>without cause;

mighty are those who would destroy me,

<sup>Ⓜ</sup>those who attack me with lies.

What I did not steal

must I now restore?

<sup>5</sup> O God, you know my folly;

the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

<sup>6</sup> Let not those who hope in you <sup>(a)</sup>be put to shame through me,

O Lord God of hosts;

let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me,

O God of Israel.

<sup>7</sup> For it is <sup>(b)</sup>for your sake that I have borne reproach,

that dishonor has covered my face.

<sup>8</sup> I have become <sup>(c)</sup>a stranger to my brothers,

an alien to my mother's sons.

<sup>9</sup> **For <sup>(d)</sup>zeal for your house has consumed me,**

and <sup>(e)</sup>the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

Garden of Gethsemane

Heb. – despised the shame

Numbers 25:1-13

**25** While Israel lived in <sup>(a)</sup>Shittim, <sup>(b)</sup>the people began to whore with the daughters of

Isa. 56:L1-8

Thus says the Lord:

"Keep justice, and do righteousness,

<sup>(a)</sup>for soon my salvation will come,

and my righteousness be revealed.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man who does this,

and the son of man who holds it fast,

<sup>(b)</sup>who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,

and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

<sup>3</sup> Let not <sup>(c)</sup>the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say,

"The Lord will surely separate me from his people";

and let not the eunuch say,

"Behold, I am <sup>(d)</sup>a dry tree."

<sup>4</sup> For thus says the Lord:

"To the eunuchs <sup>(e)</sup>who keep my Sabbaths,

who choose the things that please me

and hold fast my covenant,

<sup>5</sup> <sup>(f)</sup>I will give in my house and within my walls

a <sup>(g)</sup>monument and a name

better than sons and daughters;  
 I will give them an everlasting name  
 that shall not be cut off.

6 "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,  
 to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,  
 and to be his servants,  
 everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,  
 and holds fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,  
 and make them joyful in my house of prayer;  
 their burnt offerings and their sacrifices  
 will be accepted on my altar;  
 for my house shall be called a house of prayer  
for all peoples."

8 The Lord God,  
 who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,  
 "I will gather yet others to him  
 besides those already gathered."

Jesus' cleansing of the temple was a significant revelation of his Messiahship:  
 The quote from Psalm 69:9 is a psalm of David where he is seen as a pious man, yet  
 not innocent of sin, who cries out for deliverance from persecutors.  
 In spite of his failings, he has a zeal for the house of God, the temple where God's  
 presence is, for here is where the worship of Yahweh supremely took place on earth at  
 that time.

In this incident in John 2 we see Jesus is not meek and mild but righteous and angry  
 that people were carrying on commercial business in a sacred place in the temple, the  
 place designated for Gentile proselytes to come and worship as "God-fearers," those  
 Gentiles who had come to believe in Yahweh and committed themselves to his worship  
 and service.

So their access to the worship of Yahweh was being interfered with; their right to sacred  
 access was being pushed aside by greedy merchants who were only concerned to line  
 their own pockets.

Those who would disrupt or destroy the rightful worship of God's people engendered  
 his righteous anger. As the very Son of God he had the right overturn the money  
 changers tables and take a whip and drive the sheep and oxen out of the temple.

This incident in Jesus' early public ministry was a revelation of who he was, the Son of the Father, and of his righteous zeal for the purity and sacredness of his Father's worship.

The protection of the worship by God's people of the Father was a consuming passion of Lord Jesus Christ. He went to the cross to remove our sins so we could worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Let us not neglect what Christ has won for us and let us do all we can to enable others to draw near and worship him also.

-by Jeff Gregory, pastor  
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