

Sermon for The Third Sunday in Lent

Date: March 7, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Exodus 20:1–17

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18–31

Gospel Reading: John 2:13–22

Sermon Text: John 2:13–22

Sermon Title: Mad About You



Introit: Psalm 69:14-16; Antiphon: Psalm 69:9

Hymns:

LSB 587 – I Know My Faith is Founded

LSB 909 – Christ is Made the Sure Foundation

LSB 981 – To Your Temple Lord, I Come

LSB 575 – My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

LSB 427 In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151



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Text: John 2:13–22

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 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. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore 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.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

I wanted to take another look at Jesus cleansing the Temple today. We covered it two weeks ago on Wednesday evening looking at this significant event that occurred on Monday of Holy Week. We see a very different side of Jesus here. He's overturning tables and scattering money. He makes a whip out of cords and drives men and animals from the Temple.

That doesn't look like any model evangelism program I've ever seen. This is not the Jesus we're used to seeing! It is not gentle Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger. It is not the Jesus who dines with tax collectors and sinners and touches untouchable lepers.

It's not the Jesus we used to, and yet this is not a different Jesus. This is not Jesus acting out of character. This is Jesus still acting out of love and compassion. This is Jesus caring for His people. God is love.¹ Jesus is God. Jesus is love. This is Jesus' love. It is love that cannot stand by while people are being harassed and bullied, and driven from the house of God.

It wasn't the house, the Temple, that was really so important. The truth is God said He was happy with a traveling tent, the Tabernacle. In fact God designed the Tabernacle. David designed the Temple. The Temple wasn't important. It was what took place at the Temple that was so important. It was the place of repentance and sacrifice. It was the place where God and man were reconciled. It was where sin was dealt a death blow, as repentance is offered and forgiveness is given. A place of hope and faith in God and His promises. A place for all people.

The House of God, was supposed to be a house of prayer, a house of faith, a house of forgiveness, a house of holiness, and it had been turned into "Temple-Mart." What had started out with good intentions: providing sacrificial animals for traveling worshipers who couldn't travel with them, had turned into a focus on money over souls. God's people, not receiving the spiritual care God wanted them to have. Forgiveness had been turned into business. The great treasures of God's love and grace had been reduced to a savings account with a good interest rate.

Something had gotten lost in the shuffle. That something was the most important thing of all. The forgiveness of God. We see this all too well at the now quickly approaching Easter time. When things get busy, when things get hectic, when God gets lost in the shuffle, and becomes just one more thing to check off the

1 **1 John 4:7-8** – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

lists of things to get done that day. We need a little more Mary and a little less Martha.²

We may still come to church, we might still pray, we may still read His Word, but are we doing the right thing for the wrong reason? Does the “business of God” replace the forgiveness of God? Have we whittled our Lord’s forgiveness down to a transaction, empty of meaning? What is God’s forgiveness worth? What is reconciling with God worth?³

It’s easy for us to look back at what happened at the Temple and think, “They got what was coming to them! Those hard-headed, ungrateful sinners!” It’s easier to look at “those people.” It’s often much harder to look into the mirror.

We need a little madness in our hearts. A little Lenten turning over of the tables in our hearts. Driving out of the beasts of sin that have settled in and made themselves at home replacing forgiveness. We need the love, compassion and passion of God that will not let us go our own way; that will not let us stay in our sin and die. God loves to give life.

We need the love, compassion and passion of God that gives the Law to reveal the stench of our sin, to cleanse the tainted temples of our hearts. We need the love, compassion and passion of God that cuts to heal; that kills to make alive; that dies to give life. We need the love, compassion and passion of God that caused Him to send His Son to take up our sin. We need the love, passion and compassion of God that consumes Jesus with zeal, with fervor, for the Temple building, and the temple of your heart. We need the love, compassion and passion of God that will drive us to repentance, the vehicle of forgiveness.

Thank God we have such a God. Who is completely consumed with you. He is consumed with your forgiveness and reconciliation. He cares about every detail of your life. He cares about how you live. He cares about the things you do. He cares when He sees you wandering off the narrow road.⁴ He cares when He sees you hurting yourself with things you do. Things that all too often might appear harmless at first. He cares so much He was willing to step in to do something about it, even if we don’t think we want Him to.

2 **Luke 10:38-42** Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

3 **2 Corinthians 5: 18-19** – All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

4 **Matthew 7:13-14** – Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide, and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many, but the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

It is that very “stepping in” that not only works in our hearts and lives to drive us to repentance, but that has provided a new Temple. A new Temple that has taken the place of the old one. A new Temple that isn’t anchored to a foundation in Jerusalem. It is a new place where God dwells with His people, not in stone, but flesh and bone.

A new place where God and people are reconciled and where forgiveness takes place. The new Temple of which Jesus said:

Destroy this Temple,
and in three days I will raise it up.⁵

That is what Easter is really about. Not busyness, pretty eggs and a good meal. It is about Emmanuel, the dwelling of God with us. It is about Jesus who was destroyed on the cross, and was raised up on the third day, so that while the other Temple, the old Temple, is long gone, this new Temple is still with us, Emmanuel, and will always be. As you, in repentance and faith, reconciled to God, take into yourself that Temple, at this Sacred Table, in Holy Communion, you are a Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The new Temple, Jesus, comes to us in love, compassion and passion. To care, forgive, teach, lead, heal, speak, cleanse, wash, free and feed us. Jesus is here to care for His people, His Church, His bride. He is still, this very day, completely consumed by love for you.

That is the Jesus who walked into the Temple in Jerusalem. He is the Lamb of God who rendered all other sacrificial lambs obsolete. His is the One upon whom the whip of hate and scorn lashed out. His is the One who redeemed us not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

His is the One consumed with us: consumed by our sin on the cross, and yet is risen and lives to give forgiveness and life through repentance. The One consumed with us is consumed by our death in His death, and yet is risen and lives to give forgiveness and life through repentance. The One consumed with us is now consumed by us, as He gives us His very Body to eat and His Blood to drink, and yet He is not consumed, but risen and lives in us so that we receive forgiveness and life through repentance .

His life into our life, and our life into His life. All for one singular purpose, that we might live with Him forever; that as He dwells with us here in our home, we too might dwell with Him there in His.

5 John 2:19

That was always the plan.⁶ When the new Temple came to Jerusalem, the old Temple would pass away. That was always the plan. That Jesus be Made the Sure Foundation of both our lives here, and our lives eternal was always the plan.

St. Paul wrote, “we preach Christ crucified.” Not a God we can control. Not a God we can understand. Not a God who puts up with us. Not a God who is content to let us go our own ways, or who pretends at our wrongful actions. He is a God who, one Passover long ago, wreaked a little havoc, in the Temple, and then a lot of havoc in all of Creation, on the cross. In so doing He conquered sin, death, the devil and hell and redeemed you as His own.

He could not stand by, and cannot still. It is in His love, compassion and passion, He comes to you. Not mad at you, but mad about you.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**



6 **Ephesians 1:4** – He chose us... before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.