

Reverential Worship John 2:13-17

Our text this morning will be John chapter 2, verses 13 to 17, but we will read from John chapter 2, verse 13 through to verse 22.

Before the reading, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer. Father in heaven, we ask that you would bless your word to us now by your Spirit. We ask that you would give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, John chapter 2, verses 13 to 17. We'll read through to verse 22. ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, 'Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.' ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, 'What sign do you show us for doing these things?' ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰ The Jews then said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² 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." Amen.

Well when last we were in the gospel of John, we were at the wedding in Cana, and there Jesus transformed water into wine. We tried to interpret, or understand that sign or miracle from what we had already read in John chapter 1. The fact is, John expects us to always be remembering that Jesus is the Word, and that the Word is God, and that the Word has taken upon Himself flesh. John chapter 1 leaves us believing, or we should be believing, that Jesus is indeed God incarnate, that where Jesus is, there God is.

So as you take that as your background and read on into chapter 2, you find that where God is, things happen. Where God is, things are done. Where God is, there is blessing, for example. And so Jesus is a guest at a wedding, and they run out of wine and they need the wine. It's a great social disaster to run out of goods at your wedding feast.

A wedding feast was a big deal. It was a seven-day feast, and it was important that everyone got as much as they wanted. That was important for your social standing. People would basically talk about you; it was actually in a way against the law, at least the Jewish rabbinic law, not to satisfy people at a wedding feast. So Jesus turns water into wine.

We talked a little about how in the Old Testament, the abundance of wine was always considered to be an abundance of the blessings of God. But as you come to the end of that passage on the transformation of water into wine, you notice that some people are none the wiser. Some people don't actually know what's going on.

Chapter 2, verse 9: “When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew).” He was none the wiser. He knew nothing. If we look at verse 11 of John chapter 2, Jesus manifested his sign, “And his disciples believed in him.” It was kind of a public miracle, but it was also, in a way, a secret miracle. It was for some to see, and not for others to see; for some to understand, and not for others to understand.

Well now we come to Jesus going up to Jerusalem, He goes to the temple at the time of the Passover. Now this is the biggest national feast of the Jewish nation at that time. It’s the big deal. For example, the historian Josephus of that age estimates that at least 250,000 men packed into Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, and attached to the men there would be families, sons, wives.

And every family had to have a sacrifice. Could you imagine? How many beasts, how many animals are in or around Jerusalem at this point in time? So many animals were sacrificed that they claimed that the blood formed a stream that just flowed out of the temple and down the side of the temple mountain, like a creek, like a slaughterhouse.

So much blood, so many animals, so many people—you’ve got a city that’s just packed absolutely full to bursting point. The nearest picture that you might get today, here in Australia, might be a coastal resort town in the Christmas-New Year break. You go down to the beach, for example Attafra, and people are queued up outside of every shop out onto the street, and the line goes down the footpath. Lunchtime at the fish and chips shop is like a competition—who can last the longest and who can push the hardest to get to the front to buy some food?

Well that’s kind of the picture you’ve got of Jerusalem at this time. And Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, up to the Passover, to this time of worship. There’s a problem. There’s something that needs to be changed. The problem is that Jewish worship, by this time, had become very much an empty, formal “I pay my fee, I get my ticket” kind of worship.

We’re given an indication of that by what’s going on in the outer court of the temple, in the place where the Gentiles were also to be worshipping God. God actually says in the Old Testament that the temple was put there to draw the nations. And the prophets spoke of the nations, the Gentiles, being drawn in to worship God at His temple.

Well it’s here in the Court of the Gentiles, where the peoples of the world are supposed to be coming to meet God, that you’ve got a market. It’s a business center, where you sell sacrifices, and where the temple tax is collected. But it’s a little bit more than that. It’s a money-making enterprise. There are indications that the whole process was corrupt.

Let’s say you lived near enough to be just walking up to Jerusalem as a family group. Well, you’re supposed to be able to bring for the Passover sacrifice the very best of your own lambs. And so you bring it to the temple and a representative of the priests, a Levite, looks at your lamb and says, “No, no, no, no. That lamb is not without spot or blemish. That lamb is not good enough to be offered before God. I think it’s a little bit misshapen. I think one front leg is

longer than the other, and one eye looks a little bit dull. No, I'm sorry, you can't use that lamb. But if you go and see my brother down there, he'll sell you a lamb. It will be approved. You can buy an approved lamb. It's a little bit pricey, but don't worry about that. You've got nothing to worry about."

You've got that kind of set-up going on in the temple court. You've got money changers exchanging money. Now why are they exchanging money? Because the priests who ran the temple would only accept payment in certain coinage. You had to pay per family a certain amount per year, per man, to the temple. If you wanted to be a worshipping, practicing Jew, you paid a temple tax. You couldn't pay it in Roman money. Or if you were living in Phoenicia, you couldn't pay it in Phoenician money. It had to be paid in shekels.

So if you've come from far away to worship at the Passover and to there also pay your tax, you have to exchange your foreign currency for acceptable temple currency. And once again, where you change money, you've got the opportunity for people to be profiteering and making and taking money from the whole process at the worship of God.

All this is happening in the temple. It's happening, not so much in the very building in the inner sanctuary, it's happening in what was called the Court of the Gentiles—the outer sanctuary. It was happening where the Gentiles were supposed to be able to come and worship God. And this enraged Jesus.

You know, if your picture of Jesus is "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," well, your gentle Jesus, meek and mild, here makes a whip and starts a stampede, and drives a crowd out of the temple forecourt. This stirs Him. This fires Him up. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, here is gentle Jesus, mad and wild. You know, the line from the *Narnia* stories concerning Aslan, the lion, the Christ-type picture in those *Narnia* stories, is that He's not a tame lion. Well, the Lamb here, the Lord Jesus Christ, was not a tame lion this day, that's for sure. And Jesus drove them out, and He made a mess of it. He messed the place up, if you want to think of it that way.

My friends, when you're worshipping, you're standing on dangerous ground. If you don't understand that, you really need to think carefully about it. When you're worshipping, you are calling God's presence down among us. When we're worshipping, we're worshipping in the very presence of God.

Now, the temple worship was soon to be cut off. In the providence of God, God destroys the temple in Jerusalem. In A.D. 70, roughly forty years later, the Roman armies raze Jerusalem, destroy the temple, take the gold away. It's never been rebuilt. Those sacrifices have never been put back in place. But at that moment, that temple in Jerusalem was the place where any true worshipper of the living God comes into the presence of God to worship God.

It's serious stuff. You're not supposed to just casually wander in. Those who lead the worship, the priestly classes, are not supposed to be conducting business in God's area, God's temple, God's forecourt. We're supposed to fear. We're actually supposed to fear. We're supposed to fear offending God, who lives here among us, who dwells in the midst of His people.

When we worship, He is present, whether we can feel it or not. I'm not talking about something you feel. I'm not suggesting that every time you worship, you're supposed to get a goosebump experience. But what I'm saying is, when God's people gather corporately to worship, Scripture tells us that He is there in the midst of us. He's here. He is present with us.

And not only should our worship glorify God, but our worship should be according to God's will, in order not to offend God, not to give offense to God. And when you're coming into worship, and when you are worshipping God, your two aims should be to glorify God and not to offend God. Worship should not be casual. Worship should not be according to the will of man. It should not be according to whatever a person thinks is best.

In the Old Testament, some of the most frightening things happened during worship. Some of the most sudden outbreaks of God's wrathful anger happened right in the middle of a worship service. For example, turn to the book of Leviticus chapter 10. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were priests in their own right. Aaron was the first ordained High Priest of the nation of Israel during the Exodus, and his sons were to be priests after him. They had commandments, they had things to do, they had works to perform in the worship of God. Let's start reading at verse 1:

¹ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the LORD has said: "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace."

"Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified." They were priests. There's no doubt about it, they were priests. They were wearing the uniform that was made for an Old Testament priest. And at the right times, they were to burn incense before God. But they got excited. They lost track of the correct order of worship. Perhaps they thought they were going to make things better. Perhaps they thought they were going to improve the worship of God. So in an unauthorized way, they offered incense. And they ended up dead. Fire came out from the Lord and consumed them. They're actually supposed to be fearful in the presence of God.

Look down to verse 8, a little later in the narrative. It says: ⁸ And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, ⁹ 'Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.'"

Now it doesn't say specifically that Nadab and Abihu had a few too many glasses of sherry, but that seems to be the implication. They had tried to undertake their temple duties, their tabernacle duties, under the influence of the wine. They tried to worship in their own way, under the influence of wine. They did the wrong thing. They ended up dead.

There's another incident. Turn forward to Second Samuel chapter 6. We'll start reading at verse 1: "David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ² And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark

of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.
³ And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart,
⁴ with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.

“⁵ And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. ⁶ And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.”

It's amazing. This central part of Israel's ordained temple-based, or tabernacle-based worship, the ark of the Lord—it would have been better to let it fall to the ground and hit the mud than it was for a man to put his hand on it. It would have been better to let it slide off the cart and hit the ground and stop worshipping and start mourning, than for a man to put his hand upon it.

And they were worshipping! David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord—songs, lyre, harp, tambourine, castanets, cymbals. They were worshipping every step of the way. They were worshipping every moment. The songs that they were singing would most likely have been psalms. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, may well have written some of the psalms that we read just for this occasion. We don't know, because there hasn't been a note put next to any of them, or at the head of any of them to know that for sure, but David, I'm sure, would have written a psalm or two just for the occasion of bringing the ark into Jerusalem.

The people are worshipping, and Uzzah is killed. He dies for touching the ark of the Lord. It's amazing to think the hand of a man is more unclean than the earth that God created. He assumed that he was more holy than the ground under it. No. The ground is not sinful, we are. He should not have reached for the presence of God. And that's what the ark symbolized. It wasn't God, and God didn't live within the ark, but the ark itself symbolized the very presence of God.

So just as Genesis chapter 9 tells us that the sin of murdering man is a sin against the image of God, and therefore a murderer must die, well a symbol which is ordained by God to symbolize the presence of God, the ark, must be treated as though it were the presence of God, for God has put that importance upon it. So to put your hand upon the ark was to assault the God of Israel—insult Him, grieve Him, anger Him. And so Uzzah is killed.

Turn forward again to Isaiah chapter 1. We started Isaiah on Christmas day, so we looked at this passage on Christmas day, 2016. This is God's complaint to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah, probably around about the time of King Uzziah. Isaiah 1, verse 12:

“¹² When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?
¹³ Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. ¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.”

Just look back at that line, “I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.” He cannot endure sinful worship; He cannot endure an iniquitous gathering that claims that it itself is the worship of God. And with those passages in mind, now consider what Jesus found when He comes to the temple in Jerusalem—oxen, sheep, pigeons, money-changers trampling the forecourt, trampling the dwelling place of God. Now we know from John chapter 1 that the dwelling place of God is not a building. God is now incarnate. The dwelling place of God upon the earth at that moment was Christ Himself. But God fills the heavens and the earth.

Scripture tells us in Acts chapter 7, verse 48, in Stephen’s sermon before he was stoned to death, that God does not dwell in a house made by hands. But once again, the temple, like the ark, when God ordains that a place is holy, when God ordains that a place has certain and particular significance, when God says, “When you draw near the temple, you are drawing into my presence,” it becomes special. It becomes set apart. It becomes sanctified. The word sanctified literally means to be cut off, or to be fenced off, to be set apart.

The temple area under the Old Testament, by the light of the word of God, was a set-apart area. Temple worship was true worship, until Jesus had risen from the dead. Until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, temple worship was true worship. Once Jesus rose from the dead, temple worship was finished. They were still sacrificing and they were still claiming to be worshippers of God, but as far as God was concerned, He had demonstrated that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, His Son. Jesus had now shed the true blood that washes away sins.

The blood of lambs, the blood of goats, the blood of cattle never actually washed away sins. It was always a sign pointing to the One who was coming. When Jesus came, His blood is the blood that fulfills the promise. It does wash away sin. The book of Hebrews argues very carefully, and expects us to understand, that His one sacrifice was now the once-for-all sacrifice that purchases and cleanses the people of God. But at this moment, it is true worship. It’s a place where all the peoples of the world were to worship, according to Isaiah chapter 56, verses 6 and 7. All the peoples of the world were to be called in to worship.

In the synoptic gospels, when Jesus cleanses the temple, Jesus says, “You’ve taken a house of prayer for all the nations, and you’ve turned it into a den of robbers.” That’s a quote from Jeremiah chapter 7. Jeremiah, preaching to the nation of Israel, was preaching to a people who had become convinced that because they had the temple in their midst, because God had established a temple in Jerusalem, they could safely break the commandments; they could safely and casually break God’s law. They were convinced that the temple was their protection.

In one part, Isaiah mockingly says, “You say, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,’ as if just repeating that mantra is somehow or other your protection.” And the message of Jeremiah was, “No, it’s *because* Jerusalem has the temple of the Lord, it’s *because* this place is the dwelling place of God that your sins must be punished.”

Jesus’ approach here is exactly in agreement with that of Jeremiah. The Old Testament is always looking forward to Jesus. And Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of what you see in the Old Testament. And so Jeremiah, prophesying against a sinful nation and warning them that the

temple was not going to protect them just because the temple was there, is fulfilled, if you want to think of it that way, in Jesus coming to the temple in Jerusalem and conducting this cleansing of the temple.

Let's look at the text and just pick a few points out of it. ¹³ "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ 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."

The picture seems to be that what He's basically done is He's made a whip and He's stirred the cattle up. He's got the animals running around like mad, in circles, driving the people out of the temple. He specifically and particularly pours the money out on the ground. If you don't come from a farm, you might not realize what that means. But if you've stirred the cattle up and if you've got the sheep running around like mad, you've also covered the ground in something. So when you pour the coins onto the ground, the coins have been covered in something. He's defiled their business. He's literally defiled their business. He's saying, by His very actions, "It's unclean! What you're doing is wrong. This business is unclean! You ought not be conducting these things in the temple!"

It's interesting to note, He was a little less aggressive towards the pigeon sellers. "And he told those who sold the pigeons, 'Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.'" The pigeons were there for the poor people, those who could not afford a lamb or a goat. It appears that Jesus was somewhat more merciful to them. Perhaps they were making less money, perhaps they weren't actually part of the corruption of the priestly system that was going on at the money-changer tables with animals like cattle and sheep.

¹⁷ "His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'" When did they remember that? Well I don't think they remembered it when it was happening. I think they remembered it later. I think they remembered it much, much later—years later, even—after the resurrection, when being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as according to Jesus' promise, "He will bring all things to mind concerning me." He speaks to them from Scripture concerning the things that Jesus did.

Now we've read Psalm 69, from which the quote is taken: "Zeal for your house will consume me." Let's quickly look back at Psalm 69. What's the story? Well, the story in Psalm 69 is that King David has many enemies and they hate him. And he says the reason that they hate him is that he is a true worshipper of God. Move down to verse 18: ¹⁸ "Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies! ¹⁹ You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. ²⁰ Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. ²¹ They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink."

You know that's quoted in the New Testament, don't you. You know that that's quoted when Jesus was on the cross. He was given sour wine to drink. What was one of Jesus' titles? Son of David. David is a pointer to Jesus, the one who will fulfill all prophecies.

Move down to Psalm 69, verse 29: “²⁹ But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! ³⁰ I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. ³¹ This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. ³² When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive.”

So you see, Jesus quotes a psalm that starts off with King David troubled, King David being reproached by those who hate God, King David suffering because he is a true worshipper of God. If you want to know why the house of Benjamin and King Saul failed to secure the royal line, or failed to secure kingship, it’s because Saul was not a true worshipper of God. Saul was one who did things according to his own will.

Remember the big fallout between Saul and Samuel. What happened? Saul started to sacrifice animals, as though he were a priest. Saul, seeing that the people were not content, tried to take upon himself the role of a priest. Improper worship, no true worshipper—People who claim to worship but don’t worship in spirit and truth are not actually worshippers.

So Jesus here is speaking judgment upon the temple. In a way, what He’s trying to do is transform worship. And it would appear that Jesus cleansed the temple twice. If you read the gospel of John, one of the very first things Jesus does in His public ministry is cleanse the temple. Read Matthew, Mark, or Luke, and you find that in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, one of the very last things that Jesus does before He goes to the cross is cleanse the temple.

The changes that He makes here are obviously not permanent. They don’t learn their lesson. They don’t take it to heart. They don’t receive the word of God. They don’t receive Jesus as from God. We could imagine that the next day—“He’s not around? Set up the stalls, bring in the cattle, bring in the sheep. Back to business. Back to business on the spot.” It was just a temporary thing.

Jesus is about transforming and making changes. But there must be true worship. When we claim to be the people of God, as I’ve said, we’re claiming a dangerous thing. When we speak as though we indeed are the temple of Christ, we’re making a dangerous statement. You don’t come into the presence of God in a casual way.

In the book of Acts, Ananias and Sapphira lie to Peter. Peter says, “You’ve lied to God,” and they end up dead. They’re the equivalent of Nadab and Abihu. They’re the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament wrath of God breaking forth because His sanctuary was being abused.

In Scripture, in the New Testament, the temple is going to become the people of God, both corporately and singularly. Turn to First Corinthians chapter 3, looking at verses 16 and 17: “¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” “And you are that temple”—that “you” is “you all.” It’s plural. That’s the collective “you.” All of you, you all, all together—“You all are that temple.”

But move forward in First Corinthians to chapter 6. There we look at verse 19: “¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” That “you” is singular. That’s individuals. You, each, every one of you. “You, your body, is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God. You are not your own.”

Corporately, we are the temple; individually, each and every one of us *is* a temple. And we live and we worship in the presence of God, and where God’s people are gathered, God is there. Now God is everywhere. He’s omnipresent. We understand that. But there’s a special and a particular way in which God is present with His people.

Move forward to Ephesians chapter 2. We’ll start reading at verse 11: “¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.”

Where he says, “made us both one,” he’s speaking as a Jew to Gentiles. So the “us” is that in Christ we have been made one—Jews and Gentiles, we have been made one. “And has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.”

That temple complex that we’re talking about, where Jesus cleansed the temple, this was the Court of the Gentiles. And you went from the Court of the Gentiles into what was called the Court of the Women. It was a court where the Israeli women could go. You went through a gate, and you drew closer to the actual temple itself. On the wall were signs that said, “Gentile go no further. If you pass this point, you are responsible for your own death.” In other words, you’ll be killed. The dividing wall, Paul says, has been broken down. You can come past the Court of the Gentiles. You’re coming into the very presence of God, with us Jews.

Verse 15: “¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

“¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

What’s he saying? Once again, he’s saying that the church is the temple. Both corporately and individually, we are the dwelling place for God by His Spirit.

If we would just turn back now to John. I think the thing that enraged Jesus so much was that the Jews presumed that they were a privileged and superior race because they had the temple in Jerusalem. And they presumed that it really didn't matter if they defiled the forecourt of the Gentiles. It really didn't matter if they messed up the worship of the Gentiles. So you could have a market in the Court of the Gentiles, within the temple complex. You could sell cattle. "They're only Gentiles." The Jews used to call them "Gentile dogs," the uncircumcised, the second-rate humanity of the world.

I think the thing that enraged Jesus more than anything else was the fact that they were not concerned with glorifying God in their temple worship. If you love somebody, if you're deeply in love, you want people to see the person you love in the best possible light. You want people to see what it is about that person that you love. You want people to know them. You introduce them to people. You know, maybe not before their face, but one way or another, you're communicating to people, "I love this person. I treasure this person. This person—I don't know that I could live the way I live now without this person." That's just human-to-human love, person-to-person love.

God's commandment to all humanity is that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and strength. That's the Old Testament commandment in Deuteronomy chapter 6: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. If the Jews truly loved their God, they would care that the peoples of the world saw, came to know and understand, the glory of God. They would care.

They would not want the Court of the Gentiles filled with cattle and trade and money-changers, and cow manure and sheep manure, and all the rest of it. They'd want the Court of the Gentiles filled with what it was made for—Gentiles. They'd want to see the nations of the world being poured in, dragged in. All of the Old Testament prophets spoke of the fact that God was to be glorified throughout the world, that the Gentile nations were to be brought into the kingdom. And yet, they trampled God's outreach. They rejected God's calling to the nations.

See, it's not only money-making. It's a superior, a kind of a racist attitude. "We're better than you. We don't care if you come into the temple or not. You can only come this far. If you do, and if you come this far, put up with the cattle. Put up with the cattle. That's all you're worth. You're nothing to us." That's not the attitude that God expected of His people. Even in the Old Testament, God's people were to share His glory throughout the world. God's people were to be reaching out with the word of God to all the peoples of the world.

Turn to Psalm 67. We'll read the whole psalm. Psalm 67, verse 1: "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us." Now why? What's the purpose of God being gracious to and blessing His people, and making His face to shine upon them? Verse 2: "²that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. ³Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. ⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ⁶The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. ⁷God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!"

What was the purpose of God pouring His blessings upon the nations of Israel? To show the world, to call the world into the worship of God. They were His chosen and blessed people, but God always intended to get His message, His saving message, out into all the world. That was the reading we just had from Ephesians chapter 2. And He did. How? Through the blood of Christ, through the preaching of the gospel.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 3 that that was the mystery that was hidden. Now when the Bible talks about a mystery, it's not like a murder mystery, a "who-dun-it." When the Bible talks about a mystery, the idea is that there was something in Scripture that no one was seeing before, but now you see it. Something in Scripture was not being understood before, but now in the time of fulfillment, in the time of Christ, when the Holy Spirit is being poured out upon the church, now you see it. It's in the Scripture—you're not making it up, you're not inventing it, but it's now understood.

So Paul is saying that one of the mysteries that was never understood by the Jews, that they never really appreciated, though it was right there in God's word, was that God was calling the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles were being called into a covenant relationship, and were going to be counted as children of Abraham—sons of Abraham. The Gentiles were going to be brought into full fellowship with the living God. And that's the mystery that the Jews never saw.

Jesus is enraged as He walks into that temple when He sees the trade, He sees this casual approach to the worship of God, He sees this attitude that, "Well, you buy a lamb, you sacrifice the lamb, and you're set with God for another few months—nothing to worry about"; this idea that, "Well, you're only Gentiles—share the space with the cattle." That's why He was enraged. That's why He took a whip. That's why He drove the cattle out of the temple. That's why He poured the money onto the ground, into what must have been a sea of dung.

He's on a mission. He's got a purpose. There's a plan. There's a mystery to be revealed, and that is that the Gentiles are to be called. This that happened in the temple is just another part of the mission of God being fulfilled, that people throughout all the world are to be called into His kingdom. It is about purifying worship. Pure worship is worship that calls. Pure worship is worship that outreaches. Pure worship is worship that draws people into the presence of God.

We're here, we try to do things right, we try to do things well, we try to do things according to God's word. We try to give the glory to Jesus, not because we're good, not because we're better. We want to be used by God to reach the nations. We want to draw the people in. We want to be God's servants in this world, that the earth will yield its increase, that God, our God, shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, I do indeed thank you for your word. We thank you that from your word we may know Jesus.....