

Turn with me to Matthew 21:12-17

Scripture Introduction: A local pastor used to describe church this way "We don't come to church on Sunday morning. We are the church. We come to corporate worship." It's an important distinction that helps us understand God's word before us today.

Before Jesus ascended to his throne, God's dwelling place amongst men was in the tabernacle then in the temple. It was a physical structure in a geographical spot. But after the ascension the New Testament calls God's people the temple of the Lord. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** ¶ Do you (all) not know that you (all) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you(all)? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you (all) are that temple." In the Old Testament it was a physical building. At the time of Jesus, Jesus himself was the dwelling place of God with man. And in the New Covenant God's people are the temple of the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ in you (all) the hope of glory. Col. 1:27

We're about to read a story about Jesus cleansing the temple and we may be tempted to think that the way this applies to us is to view the church building as our temple and ourselves as the cleansers. But that misunderstands two things: first the church building is not the temple of the Lord. And we are not the Lord himself. Christians themselves are the temple. And we are being cleansed by the Lord still. The way that this passage would be properly applied in our life is to watch for things which Jesus doesn't allow in his temple that are in our personal life or in our corporate life as the body of Christ. Once we see those attitudes and habits which the Lord hates, allow the Lord himself to cleanse us from those things. In other words, as you hear about Jesus overturning the way God's people worshipped in the temple, let him overturn any pride that you bring to worship.

Prayer of Illumination:

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:12-17

Introduction: Kids, imagine you wanted to have a party at your house. It was a very special day and family were coming in from all over for your party. It was

going to have all your favorite things, you were going to turn the living room into a dance floor. And you were going to have delicious food in the kitchen, and games in the dining room, bocce ball outside, video games downstairs. It was going to be awesome. You'd invited all your favorite people. And so on the day of the party you go out to get some last minutes supplies and you come back just as the guests start arriving. But your little brother greets you at the door and says "I know this is the designated party place but I have my toys out everywhere, you can't party here?" You're like "What? can't we just use the living room? And he says no, he's got his town set all set up on the floor. What about the dining room table? No, he's got his lego castle set up there. What about downstairs? He says he's got all the pieces out down there. What about outside? No, I've got my action figures having a battle across the lawn.

If that was your experience would that frustrate you? Jesus had a similar feeling one day when he came back to his house. Our story was just a party but with Jesus, he came back to the temple of the Lord and the Jews were taking up all the space with their stuff. The Jews were making it really hard for others to worship God.

Fallen Condition Focus: If you've ever felt excluded, even from a place that should feel like home, even in a place of worship, hear what God's word is saying to you:

Proposition: Jesus has overturned the world's ideas of who gets to be close to God. Even we get to live in God's house and worship him.

Verse 12 "And Jesus entered the temple" This is toward the end of Jesus' ministry, in fact it's within the last week of his life. It seems that the day before this Jesus had come riding into Jerusalem with celebrity status. Hundreds, maybe thousands of people were lining the road for his entry into Jerusalem. He had healed and fed and taught hundreds if not thousands of people. And Jewish people from all over the known world were coming to stay in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. That may not sound that impressive to us. I think they've only got .5 horsepower. But actually, this donkey ride would be impressive. It would bring to Jews minds the prophecy of Zechariah. "Behold your king shall come to you riding on a donkey." Jesus is entering Jerusalem as if a

returning war hero, yay a king even. And so the people, children included, catch the significance of what's happening and begin laying down their cloaks as if to roll out the red carpet. They pick up lulabs, which were a twining of palm, myrtle, and willow branches, used in worship and prayer in the temple. And they begin chanting, saying or singing "Hosanna, to the Son of David. Hosanna to the Son of David." They're literally saying "save us now, O king." So apparently, Jesus marches into Jerusalem, right into the temple. But Mark's gospel tells us it was late when he got to the temple so he took a look at the temple and went back out to Bethany. Then on the following day, according to Mark 11:12, he came to the temple again and began to drive out those who sold and bought in the temple. When it says he drove out, the greek word is exabalen, cast out. It's the same thing that Jesus did to the demons oppressing people. He cast them out. So here, Jesus is casting out, not demons, but people. It's very strong language.

And he overturned the tables of the money changers. This is the only time we witness Jesus using force. So we must pay careful attention to the one thing that instigates Jesus to force. Jesus might look a little out of control here. But remember that this is God almighty who is holy, holy, holy. Who says to humanity "I'm so holy I cannot even look on sin." He's holding back. He could have used angelic force. He could have opened the ground. He could have called forth lightning. Jesus merely overturns their tables. What happens when someone overturns a table? When someone overturns a table whatever was on it goes flying. It's kind of hard to continue doing business in that situation. Then Jesus overturns the seats of those who sold pigeons. I wonder if the pigeon sellers were still on the seats when he overturned them? Either way, Jesus is making it uncomfortable for these people to continue selling in this place. Why?

It's not because Jesus was against sacrifices. No Jesus was for obeying the whole law. Sin must be atoned for with blood and these sacrifices would point towards his sacrifice on the cross. It's not because Jesus is against money and profit. They were engaging in a legitimate business practice that was a benefit to the community who couldn't bring their sacrificial animals many miles on foot. So what was Jesus so passionate about that he used force for the first time in his earthly ministry?

Jesus gives us his answer in the next line: He said to them "It is written my house shall be called a house of prayer." The buying and selling is not prayer and is not conducive to prayer.

The temple was set up in this way: Innermost court was for God alone, and once a year the chief priest would come in. Then there was an area for the priests alone. Then an area for the Levites and purified men, then a court of the women, then a court for the gentiles and non-purified Jews. It was in this outer court that our passage before us takes place. And instead of having a welcoming area for the blind and lame and the foreigner to worship, the Jews had designated it as a place to buy and sell things.

Jesus is being forceful because in his own house the worship of the non-Jews, and outsiders is not being considered. They can't worship in this market environment. Have you ever been to a real market? It's loud. Merchants loudly shout why to buy their product. And in this market there's animals. Animals are not always quiet. Animals do not always smell good. And animals are not always careful about where they put their droppings. This court would have been loud and smelly. Two things that don't seem to be conducive to prayer.

Why would the priests allow a market in a place that was supposed to be for foreigners to worship? The text doesn't say. But it was arrogantly inhospitable.

Jesus is angry because God had chosen the Jews to be his people, he had blessed them, and then they in turn mistreat all the other peoples that want to worship the Lord too. This is highly offensive to Jesus. He had spent much of his earthly ministry caring for the lame, the outsider, and even the foreigner. Healing them. Caring for them. Dining with them. They were dear to his heart. And when he comes into his own house, the building made to worship him, the scribes and priests are making it very hard for the people near to God's heart to worship. This rouses the wrath of God. Which brings us to our first point:

What doesn't belong in the place of worship:

Worldly engagements don't belong in the place of worship. If buying and selling even for the very act of sacrificing didn't belong then certainly worldly talk,

texting, teasing, reading, writing, playing games, even worldly thinking doesn't belong in worship because it inhibits you and others from worshipping the king of heaven. For the ancient Israelites the place of worship was more a matter of where. For us today, the place of worship is more a matter of when. On the Lord's day, when your session has called you to corporate worship, that is the place of worship. This building is not holy. This room is not holy. But the Lord's day is holy. And the Lord's presence is holy. It is said that He inhabits the praises of his people's and that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is with them. If he is with us it makes sense to pay him more attention than whatever worldly matter tempts you to distraction.

What doesn't belong in worship? Pride. Pride doesn't belong in the place of worship. National pride, (when you think of your country as better than all the others) the Jews regarded the temple as place of national pride. In Jeremiah's time they trusted in it as a talisman, a good luck charm. They thought Jerusalem would never be taken militarily because they had God's temple there. But God was saying through Jeremiah, "don't trust in this building when you don't trust in me." Listen to what else Jeremiah says in the passage that Jesus quoted when he mentioned that his house had become a den of robbers:

Jeremiah 7:2-7 Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. ³ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' ⁵ ¶ "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, ⁷ then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

There was this superstitious nationalistic pride in Jeremiah's time and in Jesus' time and later. It's one thing to love your country but if in so doing you look down on other peoples, you misunderstand God and his grace to you even if you are

God's chosen people. In 70 A.D. because of their pride the Jews rebelled against the Romans and then holed up in the temple. They used the temple as their fortress. So God used the Romans to destroy it. The Jews were trusting in their nation and not in their Lord; they were trusting in the symbol and not in the thing signified. So one thing that must be purged from our corporate worship is superstitious national pride and trust in symbols instead of the savior. It's a blessing to love your country. But corporate worship of the king of kings is not just for one country. Corporate worship is not just for your language group. Corporate worship is not a place for one political party. We misunderstand the people of God, the nation of God, and citizenship in heaven when we mix our religion and our national pride. What Jesus is saying to the Jews is worship is for all people! Matthew leaves it out but the full quote is a house of prayer **for the nations**.

I wonder how Jesus would have responded if his house was to be a house of prayer for the nations, and there was only one nation's flag there.

What really inhibits worship? It can't be mere noise. For the noises of animals dying was a part of temple worship. It can't be travel distance because the ancient Israelites would travel days on foot to get to the temple. It can't be the comfort of the seating or the quality of the roof because, there was neither! Nay, what most inhibited Israelite worship and what most endangers our worship today is PRIDE. And for some of us we are most tempted by pride in worship. We are tempted to take pride that we came to Christ and left sinful ways behind. We are tempted to take pride in our distinctiveness from liberals or catholics or mormons or evangelicals. We are tempted to take pride in our knowledge of theology of our ability to withstand long exegetical sermons. We are tempted to take pride that we go to a small church or a local church or a reformed church. But it is only by your grace O God that we are to be found here Sunday morning, only by your grace. We can take no pride in good desires found in us, for they all came from your hand almighty father. Therefore we can have no pride in our worship.

It is our pride that directs our application to someone else: to someone else's disobedient child or someone else's sin, or someone else's sad life. It is our pride that tempts us to think that this sermon would be so good...for someone else. It is

our pride that causes us to forget our sin and, come sunday, find ourselves in little need of grace. When we look at other people's problems in our church is it not our pride that holds us back from helping saying "That's their problem. They caused that problem in their life, now they must deal with it." Pride has no place before a throne of grace. (repeat)

Pride makes us think of ourselves before others. Do we leave visitor parking spots open for visitors? Do we make sure there's seating for visitors in worship? Do we approach and welcome new people that we see? Do we explain what we're doing and why to newcomers? Do we leave seats for them or do we try to take up "our" space with "our" stuff? If we are truly considering God as we worship we will evidence his heart for the outsider by being considerate of their worship.

So in one sense worship of the covenant Lord, even in Old Testament times, was set up to be seeker sensitive. Outsiders were welcome, expected, provided for and prayed for. Jesus takes facilitating their worship very seriously. In another sense worship of the covenant Lord has never been or ever will be seeker-sensitive. Outsiders, then and now, are outsiders. There were and there are dividing walls. And certainly, the seeker doesn't determine what belongs in worship and what doesn't. He does not have the final say. The Lord does.

So what does belong in corporate worship?

What does belong in the place of worship: Our text draws our attention to four things: teaching, healing, crying out, and praying.

Teaching: Verse 13 "He said to them, 'It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers." Jesus is teaching people what the scriptures says and what the scripture means. Matthew is very brief here but what we can take this to mean is that Jesus explained his reasons for cleansing the temple by pointing to scripture. He was teaching people what the scripture says, what it means and how to apply it to current life. Mark 11:17 and 18 bears this out "And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers. And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and

were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching." In Luke "He was teaching daily in the temple and the people were hanging on his words."

So teaching from God's word is something that belongs in God's house. If you come to God's house, He's going to feed you. He's going to teach you like a Father. Adult children have you ever gone over to your father's house? And you share with him the burden of your heart or he knows about what's going on in your life. Does your earthly father sometimes teach you saying "Remember how I told you... here's how that applies today." In the same way when you come into your heavenly father's house, expect him to say something to you. Expect him to teach you. Expect him to remind you of something he already told you. It still applies in this new situation. The word of the Lord endures forever.

Liberty Church PCA, y'all love exegetical preaching. Some of you prepared for the Lord's teaching by searching the scriptures before worship. You expect to hear from the Lord and so I see that some of you bring your bibles and read along and take notes, mental or written. You pay attention to the word being preached. You care to teach covenant children. You even encourage one another with scripture during the week in private conversation. That's great. Do so more and more.

What belongs in the place of worship?

Healing: Verse 14 "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them." Verse 15 says he did wonders. This is again referring to miraculous healings. Healing is something that belongs in God's house. Healing is an appropriate part of corporate worship. Prayers for the sick may sometimes seem to crowd out all other types of prayers on our prayer list, or our pastoral prayer. But prayers for the sick are entirely appropriate for worship because of the God we serve. When Jesus walked the earth he was a healer. He coupled healing and teaching so that people could understand that his teaching was healing and that his healing taught about who he is, he is a healer, and maker of all things.

In Jesus' times the lame, the blind, the broken were only allowed into the outer court. This requirement was intended to point to God's holiness and our need for

healing. Physical problems pictured our spiritual problems. But now that Jesus has ushered in the New Covenant the old has passed away. We deal no longer in pictures, in shadows, but the reality is now here. The real problem, the real thing that God's holiness cannot stand is not sickness but sinfulness. And sinfulness has been overturned at the cross. Therefore it is fitting that sickness be overturned in worship as well.

But healing in the worship service? That sounds like a charismatic televangelist. But prayers for healing, anointing with oil, elders laying hands on the sick, these are all biblical and entirely appropriate for God's house, for corporate worship. Now, we should not do it with emotional manipulation. We should not do it as a replacement for the gospel. We should not lie and say we're healing when we aren't. Or lie and say we've been healed when we haven't. We should simply pray for the sick, laying hands and anointing them as your session so determines. And then when healing comes from the Lord give him all the glory. Don't merely pray for the sick in your corporate worship. Also give thanks when he miraculously answers your prayers for healing. Wonder in amazement at his goodness, kindness and majesty.

Crying out: In the Greek that word is *krazontas*. It's a loud, sometimes wordless utterance. And it's the children who are doing it here. When do children usually cry out loudly? When they want something, when they don't get their way, when they're playing, when they're hungry. What about when they're exalting Jesus, louder than anyone else. The children are crying out even when we have no record of the adults crying out. In our passage, children have the courage to praise Jesus loudly when other people don't think it's right. Worship isn't about doing what other people think is right.

One of the beautiful and hilarious things about children is that they don't know what other people think is right. When I was a child I would wear turquoise vans hi-top shoes, knee hi yellow striped tube socks, a collared shirt, and jam shorts that were made with some random upholstery print of flying ducks (that my grandma made)...for picture day. I did not know what other people thought was right, what was socially acceptable. Neither do the kids in our story today. They

don't know that other people don't think it's right to call Jesus the long awaited Jewish king to his face, in the temple, loudly so everyone can hear. Other people look at them and think "That's inappropriate behavior. That's not good." People frowned at them for doing that. But the kids didn't know that or they didn't care and so they just continue to shout what everyone had been shouting as Jesus came into Jerusalem the other day. Hosanna to the Son of David! So don't worry about what other people think is right, cry out your praises to Jesus in corporate worship.

So the chief priests and the scribes notice that the children are shouting something unacceptable. They notice that the children are proclaiming Jesus king and Jesus isn't telling them to be quiet. The priests are not going to tell the children to be quiet because they're afraid of the crowd. The priests hint that Jesus should tell them to be quiet. But Jesus responds by quoting a psalm. Jesus is saying. "The children are correct." But not only that, I am much more than merely the son of David. AND you should know better because this is foretold in the books you pretend to study. Psalm 8:1,2 says "Oh Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! you have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babies and infants you have established strength because of your foes," Jesus is saying "I am the Lord who has established strength out of the mouths of babes." AND I've done it because of my foes, you, because you've troubled me so much priests and scribes."

So kids, if you're thinking "I don't want to loudly praise Jesus because people might not think it's right. People might think I sound funny. People might judge me or give me a bad look." Listen, Jesus loves it when you shout out his praises in worship. The best time to do this is when we're singing. Kids and adults, shout it out. Jesus got strength to face his foes through the loud praises of children. So shout his praises, children of God.

What does belong in the place of worship?

Praying: verse 13 "My house shall be called a house of prayer." The outer court of the temple didn't have chairs. It didn't have pews. It didn't have a pulpit or a choir loft, or kneelers, or pictures or statues or screens. Stone floor. Open sky. And a

steady stream of people going in and out of the inner courts to make their sacrifices. This was to be a place of prayer. This was to be a place to bring your concerns to God. To talk to God. As people prayed they would see smoke arising from the sacrifices and drifting heavenward. It was a metaphor for their prayers. Just as when a sacrifice is burned smoke arises so too when a person undergoes trial, prayer should arise. And the priests were to bring the prayers of the people before God. The priest represented men to God. The Jews had a priesthood among them who were to present their requests to God and in turn, Israel, as a people, was to be a nation of priests to the other nations. God's people were to hear the prayer requests of the nations and bring them before the throne of God almighty.

Do we need Jesus to overturn our view of prayer? Some of us are tempted to think prayer is sitting down, folding your hands, closing your eyes and being quiet. But biblical prayer is standing or laying face down, lifting your hands, raising your eyes and crying out. Much of our prayer is for sick people. That's good. But what if we prayed just as much for our non-Christian neighbors?

When Jesus quotes Isaiah saying that his house should be a house of prayer for the nations it's a little unclear what he means. Does he mean a house of prayer where the nations themselves can come and pray to God? Or does he mean a house of prayer where God's covenant people lift up prayers on behalf of the nations? I think he means both. Jesus quotes Isaiah 56 here. In Isaiah 56 verse 3 it reads "Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from his people." and then in verse 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- these will I 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." and verse 8b God says "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered." So not only was Israel to be praying for the nations, the nations themselves were to be using God's house for prayer, and sacrifice, and serving and ministering to the Lord.

The gospel according to Isaiah is wondrous! There is a wideness to God's mercy. God always intended to draw all nations to himself, to the heart of worship. And that is what you see today at Liberty Church PCA. Most of us are those nations, the goyim, the non-Jews, the foreigners whom God has brought into his very presence to minister before him in Zion his spiritual mountain. Praise be to you Covenant Lord for making all of us ministers to you!

So we talked about what doesn't belong in the place of worship: worldly engagements and pride. We talked about what does belong in the place of worship: teaching, healing, crying out, and prayer. Now we need to close by talking about who belongs in the place of worship.

Jesus was overturning who the Jews thought belonged in the place of worship. There are seven people groups that Jesus draws our attention to in the passage today:

1) children. Jesus welcomes the worship from the children in his house. The priests and scribes were indignant at the children's praise of Jesus. The praises of children are welcomed here. Even the cries of infants are the sounds of the covenant.

2) the blind. The blind came to Jesus in the temple and he healed them.

3) the lame. The lame came to Jesus in the temple and he healed them. Are the blind and the lame welcomed into our corporate worship? Or do we balk at handicap accessibility requirements? Are we on the lookout for families or people with special needs? Do we delight to make worship more accessible to them? They have much to teach us about our own spiritual state of blindness and lameness without Christ. Jesus seemed to think his house was just the place for these people to get healing both in body and spirit. Will we be a part of the healing or the hindering process for the blind and lame?

4) the fatherless. Jesus draws our attention to the fatherless by quoting the Jeremiah passage. Elders are you attending to the worship of the fatherless?

5) widows. Jesus draws our attention to the widows by quoting the Jeremiah passage. In Jeremiah 7:5 the Lord says "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever." If you welcome the fatherless, so God will welcome you into his promised land. In ancient times they were tempted to take advantage of the fatherless and the widow, or at very least ignore them. God's people can be tempted to ignore the fatherless and widow today because they can have many needs. Sometimes their struggle is marked by sin, sometimes it isn't. God makes no distinction. We are to give them justice, which means give them mercy in light of their tragic loss. The Lord says "Then I will let you dwell in this place." our attitude toward them is quite serious.

6) foreigners. Jesus draws our attention to the foreigners and the sojourners by quoting Isaiah. Do we make foreigners feel welcome or foreign in our worship? Imagine if you walked into worship and were surrounded by people speaking different languages. That's how it was intended to be in the temple. That's how it will be in heaven. We can make it how it is now by including different languages in our place of worship. It acknowledges that we're all foreigners the Lord has let in.

7) barren. Jesus draws our attention to barren men and women by quoting Isaiah which says in chapter 56 verse 3 "Let not 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 a dry tree." A Eunuch is a man who can't have any children. Verse 4 "For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

Eunuchs weren't allowed into the inner courts of the temple. And so they were looked down upon, especially in that culture as useless and abandoned by God. And God speaks to that deep fear with personal words, I will give you an everlasting name that will not be cut-off."

Are those who are barren given a better name here? Do we honor single folk at our church? Or do they feel worthless and lonely in our midst, like a dry tree? Single folks, childless folks, you are dear to the Lord, there is a place for you here with God's people, God has not abandoned you. You will have a lasting legacy and you will bear much fruit as you thrive in the midst of God's covenant people.

The barren, the foreign, the widow, the orphan, the blind, the lame, and the young, they are not the only ones that can feel excluded. You may not fit any of those categories and yet you may feel far from God, cut off from the joy of his presence. In Jesus' time women felt excluded sometimes, the poor, the Samaritan, the Galilean, the sick felt excluded sometimes. If you're here today and you're feeling excluded, unwelcome in God's presence, you could feel that way for two reasons. Either you have already been accepted into God's presence through the sacrifice of our great high priest Jesus and yet the accuser would have you think you're far off. It may be that you're being lied to. If you are in Christ, you are indeed near and dear to God's heart no matter your outward state. Do not listen to the accuser who is telling you that God doesn't want you. Rebuke Satan in Jesus name and enter into the joy of God's presence.

Or you could feel excluded from God's presence because you are set in your sin and unwilling to let it go, unwilling to turn your life over to Jesus. That attitude causes people to rightly feel excluded from God's presence. You could feel excluded from God's presence because you're despising God, running from him. That attitude of lack of submission or arrogance both stem from pride and God will not abide such an attitude in his house for long. Judgment is coming therefore repent this day and by the powerful priestly work of Jesus' atoning death on the cross, God will welcome you into his presence. Just as Jesus overturned the tables of the money-changers in the temple so also he has overturned the values of the world. He has valued the meek and the lowly, the outcast and sinner, the immigrant and child, these he has brought near to himself. Let Jesus overturn your pride. Let him overturn unbiblical ideas about who and what you think belongs in worship. And finally Christian, know that you belong in God's house and you will dwell in God's house forever if your life has experienced Jesus' overturning power. Amen

Lord's Supper

What makes a good Hors d'oeuvre? Something salty? Something sweet? Something that awakens the palate, that whets our appetite. Do you know what it means to whet your appetite? It means to sharpen your appetite. To give you a taste for something fine, something good. An appetizer isn't meant to satisfy, to fill you up. It's meant to prepare your palate for the feast that is to come. That's what's going on here today. We're about to partake of some hors d'oeuvres that will actually focus our appetite, that will make us long for the full feast that is yet to come.

So we come to the Lord's table and here he has prepared for us bread and wine. The bread sharpens our appetite, our desire for Jesus, to be sustained by Jesus himself. Have you ever been so full of love for someone that you thought "I love you so much I could eat you up." In the Lord's supper that is what we do. We feed on Jesus, for spiritually his presence is here in the bread and wine. The wine is to sustain you, but a little, and give you a thirst for more of Jesus. He is sweet and kind and gentle, but there is a tart kick that hints of power. You can enjoy Jesus but don't trifle with Jesus, don't play around with him. He is powerful.

For that reason we may only invite to the table those who have not trifled with Jesus, but have instead publicly assented to his Lordship. If you have not come to Christ yet, come to Christ, but not yet to this table. To come to Christ, to submit your life to Christ, come before the elders and confess your faith and trust in Christ. This is not a private matter of the heart. This is a change in citizenship. It is rightly public and official. Children, as you see the wine and bread pass before you, let your desire for Christ be sharpened. Long to touch, to taste more of Christ. Consider your heart and as the holy Spirit moves you, come before the session to be admitted to the Lord's table. But until that time, let the elements pass you by.

This is a joyous feast, therefore let us partake with warm hearts, enlightened eyes, and glowing faces.

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.