

“The Cleansing of the Temple”  
John 2:12-17  
(Preached at Trinity, May 17, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verse 19 of Chapter 1** began the first week of our Lord's ministry ending with the Wedding Feast at Cana.
2. **Verse 12** begins, “after this” signifying a change. Jesus has left Cana of Galilee and has gone down to Capernaum with the entire group that had attended the wedding – Jesus, His mother and brothers, and His disciples. Capernaum was a large city about a day's journey from Cana. It would become the center of Christ's ministry. Matthew referred to it as Christ's city.  
**Matthew 9:1 NAU** - "Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over *the sea* and came to His own city."
3. They remained for a few days and then left for Jerusalem for the Passover. As Jesus entered the Temple He found the chaotic scene of commercial transactions going on.
  - A. During the Passover people came from great distances to observe the occasion. Distance made it difficult to bring the suitable lamb and they risked the chance that their animal would not be approved by the Temple officials. Animals were available for purchase in the Temple and prices were high. In addition, they didn't accept foreign money in the Temple so tables were set up to exchange currency-for a fee, of course. The whole process reeked of corruption.
  - B. The scene would have been chaotic with the sound of animals braying, the sound of coins exchanging hands, and loud bantering as pilgrims tried to get the best deal. The smell of the animals would have filled the air.
  - C. It was hardly a scene conducive to worship. It was more like a marketplace where merchants and hucksters could sell their wares. There was little interest in the worship of God.
4. In a great display of fury, Jesus made a scourge, overturned the tables, and drove out the entire group.
5. This scene is actually the first of two occasions where Jesus drove the merchants and money changers out of the Temple.
  - A. This scene takes place at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, the second takes place at the end immediately following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We read in Matthew's Gospel:  
**Matthew 21:10-13 NAS** - "And when He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup> And the multitudes were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." <sup>12</sup> And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. <sup>13</sup> And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den."

- B. We have to assume that Jesus had observed this for many years prior to this time. It was now at the beginning of His ministry that He displayed His authority as the Son of God.
  - C. We shouldn't be surprised that the practice reappeared which explains the second Temple cleansing three years later.
6. You can imagine the fury in the eyes of Jesus as He drove out all of the buyers and sellers and overturned the tables of the money changers.  
There are several points I need bring to your attention

#### I. The Authority of Jesus over the Temple

- A. In **verse 18** inquiry was asked of Jesus by what authority. . .  
I'll cover this in greater detail next time.  
**John 2:18 NAU** - "The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"
  - 1. The Gospels declared over and over the absolute authority of Jesus  
**Mark 1:21-22 NAS** - " And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. <sup>22</sup> And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."  
**Mark 2:10-11 NAS** - "But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins "-- He said to the paralytic-- <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home."  
**Matthew 28:18-19 NAS** - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations"
  - 2. Jesus declared that He was Lord of the Temple  
**Matthew 12:6 NAU** - "But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here."
- B. Some have insisted that this story could not have happened because the Temple police would have immediately arrested Jesus
  - 1. Again, we find the majesty and authority of Jesus
  - 2. This was also demonstrated at His arrest  
**John 18:4-6 NAS** - "Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" <sup>5</sup> They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am *He*." And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup> When therefore He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew back, and fell to the ground."
  - 3. The power and authority of Jesus would continue to vex and infuriate the religious leaders.  
**Luke 4:28-30 NAS** - "And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; <sup>29</sup> and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, He went His way."
  - 4. This is the beginning of our Lord's ministry. He was largely unknown. But He entered the Temple as one in absolute control.

- II. The second thing we see is the abhorrence of Jesus at mere external religion
- A. The Temple was intended to be a place where people could go to meet God
1. John quotes from Psalm 69:97  
**Psalm 69:9 NAU** - "For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me."
  2. During the second cleansing we read:  
**Mark 11:17 NAS** - "And He *began* to teach and say 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 robbers' den."
  3. Meeting with God was to be a time of praise and thanksgiving  
**Psalm 100:4** – “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.”  
**Psalm 27:4** – “One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”
- B. As often was the case with Israel, worship had become just a formality
1. The temple had become so common place that no one felt the sense of God’s presence.
  2. This is no less a danger for the church
    - a. Jesus condemned the Church of Laodicea  
**Revelation 3:15-16 NAS** - "'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."
    - b. If we have lost the sense of awe in worship we must fall quickly upon our knees in repentance.
- III. The third thing we see is the anger of Jesus over their perversion of God’s Temple.
- A. The question we must again ponder, isn’t anger sinful?
1. Jesus says that in terms of the spirit of the 6th commandment anger is equal with murder –  
**Matthew 5:21-22 NAS** - "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' <sup>22</sup> "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell."
  2. Uncontrolled anger is inconsistent with the new man. **Gal.5:19-21**  
**Galatians 5:19-21 NAS** - "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

- B. We know that Jesus was sinless – so was this true anger - YES
1. There is a holy anger and a sinful anger
  2. Paul tells us (commands us) "Be angry"  
**Ephesians 4:26 NAS** - "Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger"
  3. In other words, there is a time for anger, a time when anger is the appropriate response. Sometimes anger is not only permitted but necessary. But, it must be the right kind of anger.
  4. We must not forget that anger is one of God's attributes - His wrath  
**Romans 1:18 NAS** - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"
    - a. God hates sin. He detests it. God's anger is His righteous indignation displayed against all that is not holy.
    - b. Paul tells us to exhibit a particular kind of anger - a Godly anger. Be ye angry **AND SIN NOT** - We must hate sin as God hates sin.

We can use the example of our Lord to find three principles to direct us as to the proper exhibition of anger.

- A. Principle One: The only permissible anger is directed at that which dishonors God  
"Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."  
"ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."
1. The motivation of Christ was the honor of His Father. John doesn't record that Jesus actually said these words but that His disciples applied it to Psalm 69. During the second cleansing of the Temple Jesus exclaimed:  
**Matthew 21:13 NAS** - "And He said to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den.'"
  2. Jesus had little patience towards hypocrisy and hardness of heart
    - a. Matthew Henry makes an interesting observation:  
"He never used *force* to drive any *into* the temple, but only to drive those out that profaned it."<sup>1</sup>
    - b. Jesus had little patience with religious hypocrisy
  3. The problem of anger for most people is that it is personal anger. Anger motivated by self-love. Anger is sinful when it turns inward. When it is not motivated out of a hatred for sin or the glory of God but for our own glory.
- B. Principle Two: It must not be extreme (excessive)
1. Paul teaches this in **Ephesians 4:26**  
"Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger"
    - a. This means we must not allow anger to continue or allow it to be nursed into bitterness.
    - b. We must not dwell on our anger. We **MUST** not share it with others.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1926.

- c. We must lay it aside - "let not the sun go down..."  
It must not lead to hatred, bitterness, revenge, vengeance
  - 2. Godly anger is always under control, always measured.
    - a. Matthew's Gospel gives us a clear demonstration of this. Matthew records that immediately after Jesus cleansed the Temple He healed the lame  
**Matthew 21:14 NAS** - "And *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them."  
      - a. In one moment He angrily cast the religious hypocrites out and in the next moment He gently and patiently healed the blind and lame
      - b. He did not say, "Come back some other time, I can't think about healing right now."  
No, in the midst of the overturned tables, He was fully able to return to complete calm and compassion with those in need.
    - b. He was able to manifest both anger and love
- C. Principle Three: It must not be allowed to tempt us to sin
- 1. Paul adds another injunction - "and do not give the devil an opportunity."  
**Ephesians 4:26-27 NAS** - "Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil an opportunity."
  - 2. The Bible teaches us that Jesus was tempted in every way we are  
**Hebrews 4:15 NAS** - "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, *yet* without sin."
  - 3. Jesus understood clearly what it meant to wrestle with Satan. But it is also true that His righteous life never gave Satan an opportunity to tempt Him.
    - 1. Excessive anger gives Satan great opportunity to tempt us to sin and bring harm to our brother.
    - 2. **Ephesians 6:12** - "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."
    - 3. When you lose your temper you give Satan advantage - you lose the ability to reason, you say things you otherwise might not, you think things you ought not
    - 4. It becomes personal - Satan keeps bringing it up, we begin to ponder it, it begins to fester. We begin to entertain thoughts of revenge and encourage others to join in our indignation, thus leading them to sin.  
The Christian model is that of forgiveness  
"Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors"

#### Conclusion:

- May the example of our Lord in the Temple serve as an excellent example for us.
- A. The grace of a great passion for the glory of God and a great desire to protect the sanctity of His worship.
  - B. The grace of expressing anger when God's glory is assaulted but never expressing anger when we feel slighted.