

***“Jesus’ Consuming Zeal”***

March 3, 2013

Text: John 2:12-17

**Back in John 1, we read that before Andrew/John were X’s disciples, they asked Him where He was staying.**

He invited them to come/see, which they did, & from that time to the end of their lives, they became followers of Jesus.

What could X have said/done that day while with those 2 men, that would have completely redirected their lives like that, in one brief meeting?

What did they see in Him, that was so life-changing?

It couldn’t have been His appearance, because Isaiah had prophesied of the Messiah=> *“He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him”* (Isa 53:2).

And X was so quiet/unobtrusive, He could be overlooked in a crowd.

This was another of Isaiah’s prophecies about Messiah=>

*“He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. / A bruised reed He will not break & a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice”* (Isa 42:2-3).

So what could people like the disciples have seen/heard in Jesus that caused them to follow Him, as they did?

His holy life? The wisdom manifested in His words? His infinite love for them/other-people? Yes, all of these.

But as we'll see in today's text, it was also His power.

**Last Sunday we saw Jesus display His power over matter at the wedding in Cana, when He changed water into wine.**

The disciples may have sensed His divine power before that, when they first met & spoke w/ Him.

They must have seen in His eyes & heard in His voice the power of His personality & His character.

But when He turned the water in those 6 stone waterpots into wine, they actually saw His power in action.

Today's text will show us that Jesus was also capable of exercising enormous power over people, & their reactions. He will drive out the animals being sold in the Temple, overturn the moneychangers' tables, and no one will even lay a hand on Him, to stop Him.

\* That same power over people was also seen when some Nazarenes tried to cast Him off a cliff, but Lk 4:30 describes His escape by saying simply=>

*"Passing through their midst, He went His way."*

\* It was seen again when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He asked them *"Whom do you seek?"* they said

*"Jesus the Nazarene.,"*

Jesus answered *"I am He,"* and they all fell flat on the ground (Jn 18:4-6).

Our Savior was a humble/unimposing Person, who, when you got to know Him, astounded you with His personal power, and yet w/ loving gentleness which accompanied that power.

He had the power of a lion in the gentleness of a lamb.

**As the account of Jesus' cleansing the Temple unfolds, we see His pilgrimage to Jerusalem, His purification of the Temple, and His passion for reverence in worship...**

**\* Jesus' Pilgrimage to Jerusalem**

[**John 2:12-13**] => *“After this [the wedding] He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brothers, and His disciples; and there they stayed a few days. / And the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”*

**Jesus seems to have left the wedding at Cana and made a down-hill journey to Capernaum (16 miles NE of Cana).**

His mother/disciples/step-brothers all went with Him, and they all stayed in Capernaum for a few days.

Capernaum is located on the NW shore of Lake Galilee.

If you ever visit the Holy Land, and take the boat ride on Lake Galilee, you'll prob. disembark at Capernaum, where you'll immediately come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century ruins of a white limestone synagogue.

From there you may be taken to a nearby restaurant, where they'll feed you “Saint Peter's fish,” and where you'll sometimes find a shekel in your fish's mouth, just as Peter did in Mt 17 (vs 27).

Peter's house, where X later healed Peter's mother-in-law, was in Capernaum, & James/John lived there too, all 3 men being fishermen who made their living on Lake Galilee.

So when Jesus/His-family/disciples came to Capernaum, they may have stayed w/ Peter/James/John, or even their father Zebedee.

Mt 4:13 says that Jesus made Capernaum His own hometown early in His ministry, but that was prob. a little later on, after this visit there.

In our own text, His visit seems to have been a brief stopover, before making His pilgrimage from Capernaum to Jerusalem for the Passover.

**Every male Jew over 12 years old, was expected to attend the Passover celebration in Jerusalem, every year.**

This was a commemoration of God's sparing the Jews 1500 years earlier, who had obeyed Him & smeared lamb's blood over the doorways of their houses.

That 1<sup>st</sup> Passover had taken place on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month of Nisan, which was the last night they'd spent in Egypt as slaves.

Then God had freed them, to leave Egypt forever.

Jesus had first visited the Temple when He was 12, but being a devout/faithful Jew, He had undoubtedly come back there every year since then, for Passover.

And He would do so every year from now on until His crucifixion, faithful to the commands of OT Judaism, until His death brought in the NT era.

**Passover was a family feast, led by fathers, in homes.**

That's why Jesus' final Passover, the Last Supper, was celebrated in the rented Upper Room of a house.

But many Jews also offered other animal sacrifices (even sacrificing oxen) in the Temple while they were at Jerusalem, crowding into its courts to do so.

Every Passover lamb also had to be killed in the Temple and its blood sprinkled on the altar, between 3:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon.

So Jesus used this occasion to present Himself as Messiah, to the throng that was gathered there, prob. before the sacrifices began.

But in doing so, He publicly denounced the way in which the religious leaders were allowing the Temple to be used, as a marketplace/stockyard, selling animals to be sacrificed there.

They had corrupted/destroyed its sanctity, as a holy place, and in doing so they had dishonored God Himself.

It was now virtually impossible to worship God there at all, at least in the Court of the Gentiles.

**Jesus came to cleanse the Temple of the spiritual leaven of greed and irreverence that was defiling it.**

Ironically, He would be doing so, even while Jewish women were cleaning the literal leaven from their houses, as Mosaic Law required, in preparation for Passover.

Leaven symbolized a continuation of sinful ways the Israelites had learned in Egypt, so the removal of leaven was to symbolize a discontinuation of those sins.

Unfortunately, Jewish worship in the Temple had become defiled with irreverence towards God, & that was the leaven Jesus wanted to see removed/discontinued.

It was natural for our Lord to begin His ministry at the place where God's people came to worship Him.

Worship is so central to God's plans/purposes for mankind that any defilement of true worship is guaranteed to ignite the fire of zeal/jealousy w/i His heart.

After His cleansing the Temple, Jesus wouldn't openly appear again as Messiah until His Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday.

That event would be followed immediately by His again entering the Temple & cleansing it a 2<sup>nd</sup> time.

The issue of corrupted/irreverent worship still persisted in Israel at the time of X's death.

**\* Jesus' Purification of the Temple**

[Verse 14]=> *“And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated.”*

**The outer court of the Temple had become somewhat like a stockyard.**

Originally, the practice of selling animals for sacrifice was prob. just a convenience for Jews coming to Jerusalem from distant places.

Rather than drive an ox/sheep for 70-80 miles, it made sense for a worshiper to wait until he reached Jerusalem, then buy an animal to be sacrificed, there.

At first, the local animal merchants had set up their stalls outside the Temple, at the western base of the Mount of Olives.

But in time, the priests in charge of the Temple had invited them to bring their business into it, & set up shop in the largest/outermost court—the Court of the Gentiles.

Some sort of deal was worked out by which the merchants would share their profits w/ the priests.

But although Jesus condemned that kind of greed & corruption when He cleansed the Temple the second time, His judgment against it this time centered on the keeping and selling very presence of the animals themselves, in the Temple.

**When God had originally designed the Temple, He intended this outermost court to be where all the world would learn about Him, & come to love/worship/serve Him.**

Isa 56 describes how the Lord had desired it to be=>

*“The foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant; / Even those I will bring to My holy mountain [Zion, where the Temple was located], And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for **all the peoples** [Gentiles a/w/a Jews]” (Isa 56:6-7).*

Gentiles were not allowed to go any farther into the Temple than the outermost court, so this space represented for them their whole experience of worshiping the true God of Israel.

Although God is omnipresent, His presence (throughout the OT) was manifested only in the Holy of Holies, in the center of the Temple.

The Temple was to be a place of reverent/worshipful meditation on God’s glory, and praise to His name.

But in Jesus’ time it was virtually impossible for a Gentile to worship God there, due to the filth/flies/stench and the noise created by the animals being sold in their Court.

Not to mention the noise of the merchants and moneychangers as they haggled with customers.

**“Moneychangers” exchanged foreign coins for Tyrian coins—the only ones which the priests would accept.**

Each Jew was required to pay a half-shekel Temple tax each year.

But because of the reliability of the silver content in Tyrian coins, and because most foreign coins were imprinted

w/ an image which the Jews viewed as idolatrous, an exchange was required before the Temple tax could be paid.

Naturally, moneychangers charged a hefty fee for this service.

**You can clearly see why Jesus would be appalled/angered by this commercialization of His Father's house.**

The outer court was the only place a non-Jew could have any sense of God's sacred presence.

This was the place where the Jewish people were to fulfill their calling=> Teaching the world about the only true God.

The reverent atmosphere that was supposed to pervade this court had been banished, leaving the Gentile world nowhere to go in order to approach God.

It doesn't surprise us that Jesus launched such an impassioned protest against conditions in the Temple.

What does surprise us is that He was able to wait for 30 years before doing so, coming to this place each Passover, and restraining the rage that must have been boiling w/i Him.

Now at last, in presenting Himself to Israel as her Messiah, He publicly attacked her flagrant defilement of God's sanctuary, and His holy/righteous anger came pouring out.

We see Jesus do something here that He will never do again, until His final cleansing of the Temple=> He uses physical force that even bordered on violence.

He won't do that to defend Himself when the soldier hits Him in the face just before His crucifixion.

But He will do it w/o a moment's hesitation in order to defend the worship of His Heavenly Father and the sanctity of His Father's House.

[Verse 15]=> *“And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them [prob. the animals] all out of the temple, with [both] the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables;”*

**Jesus' confrontation of those who profaned the Temple must have stirred up a lot of commotion.**

- \* Oxen/sheep undoubtedly went running off in every direction. Their owners/sellers were trying to chase them down and recapture them.
- \* Moneychangers prob. scurried about, to pick up coins rolling across the Temple floor, before bystanders got them.
- \* Dove merchants must have grabbed the crates in which they kept their doves, & hustled them out of the way.
- \* Temple police must have rushed to the scene, trying to figure out what was causing all the commotion/disorder, before Roman soldiers in Ft Antonia came rushing down their staircase into the Temple to restore order.

And once again, what amazes us most, is that no one lifted a finger to arrest Jesus—such was the power of His divine presence.

The Temple was packed w/ tens of thousands of Passover Pilgrims.

You might have expected that at least 1 muscular man would have attempted to wrestle Jesus to the ground. But no one even tried, leaving us no doubt that His divine influence was brought to bear on those around Him.

**[Verse 16]**=> “*and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away [prob. crates in which the doves were kept]; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise.’*”

### **Why were doves being sold in the Temple?**

Because that was the poor man’s sacrifice, if he couldn’t afford to buy a lamb.

When Mary/Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple after her days of purification were completed, they presented Him to the Lord & offered a pair of doves.

**Jesus commanded the animal salesmen to=> “*Stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise [a place of common commercial business].*”**

Jews didn’t speak of God as “my Father,” but only as “our Father.”

Jesus used the word “*My*,” declaring Himself to be God’s divine Son, and claiming the right to vindicate the purity/sanctity of His own Father’s house.

Later on, after cleansing the Temple again, just before His crucifixion, He left it for the last time, and spoke of it to the Jews as “*your house*,” saying=> “*Behold, **your** house is being left to you **desolate!***” (Mt 23:38).

**At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will again return to the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, & cleanse it one last time of its ultimate defilement—Antichrist’s image, which Anti-X will have set up in the Temple.**

That will be the final fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy=>

*“The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His **temple**; & the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,’ says the LORD of hosts. / ‘But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a **refiner’s fire** and like **fullers’ soap**’” (Mal 3:1-2).*

When Jesus returns, the wicked will be judged/destroyed, and no one will escape from X’s hand.

He won’t merely use a whip then, but a refiner’s fire that will burn away anyone/anything that corrupts God’s worship or opposes His Kingdom.

And a spiritual equivalent of fuller’s soap that will purify His own people’s worship in Spirit and in truth.

X's coming into the Temple in our text, was a partial/preliminary fulfillment of this ultimate/final purification of true worship by true worshipers, of the true God.

**\* Jesus' Passion for Reverent Worship**

[Verse 17]=> *"His disciples remembered that it was written, 'ZEAL FOR THY HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.'"*

**Although the 6 disciples must have been awed by Jesus' power to control people's reactions, what He did actually reminded them of David's words in Psa 69:9.**

There David describes himself as having come into deep waters of trouble, danger, and the hatred of men.

David says he has left his fate in God's hands, as he has borne reproach for the Lord, wholly trusting Him for deliverance. He is waiting on God alone for his vindication.

All those around David despise him as a fanatic for fasting & weeping before God, trusting in Him alone for help.

David says that his own brothers consider him an alien.

Why? Psa 69:9=> *"Zeal for Thy house has consumed me."*

*"Consumed"* can mean "consumed w/ fire."

This is the verse X's disciples thought of, as they witnessed Jesus' passionate cleansing of the Temple.

David wanted to be in God's house, looking to Him in all His holiness/glory, trusting Him completely for his protection. He opposed anything/anyone who brought unholiness into God's house, or who dishonored Him in any way.

David was burning up w/ zeal/passion for God's house.

**When we take David's words, and apply them to X, they mean that He too was on fire w/ zeal for the sanctity/purity of God's house, & the worship of Him that occurred there.**

Therefore, the irreverence, the commercialism, the profane attitude of those, into whose care the Temple had been entrusted, was absolutely intolerable for Him.

As He was driving the merchants' animals out of the Temple, He was completely absorbed/consumed with a passion for purity/reverence in God's house.

Jesus had always burned w/ a passionate desire to see God honored/worshiped in His Temple.

And He, like Jeremiah, was tired of constantly restraining that fiery passion w/i Him.

Jeremiah had written this=> *"If I say, 'I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,' Then in my heart it becomes like a **burning fire** Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it"* (Jer 20:9).

That's how Jesus felt=> He couldn't stand to see God's House profaned like this, & not say anything about it any longer.

\* Jesus was filled w/ the same righteous indignation that caused Moses to shatter/destroy the 2 tablets of the Law, when he discovered Israel worshiping the golden calf (Ex 32:19).

\* His spirit was provoked w/i Him, like Paul's was, when he witnessed the idols in Athens which were at the center of that city's idolatrous religion & false worship (Acts 17:16).

**What does today's text say to us, & how should we respond?**

This is an especially important question as we prepare our hearts to approach the Lord's Table.

What if, right in the middle of our Communion Service, Jesus Himself were to enter our Worship Center, the way He entered the Temple in our text, in the middle of their sacrifices?

What would He see in our hearts, as we go thru the motions of worship—sincere worship; or irreverent worship?  
Would He see unconfessed sin?

Writing about a communion service like this, Paul said=>

*“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. / But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. / For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly” (I Cor 11:27).*

Examine your own heart, asking yourself what you brought into this worship service today.

Readiness to worship the Lord of glory, in Spirit/truth?

Or was it a whole string of worldly preoccupations?

What about right now?

Is your heart focused on X, & your love for  
Him?

Where God's Word is proclaimed, the minds of those who  
come to worship should be reverently focused on  
it/Him, not compromised by worldly  
affections/distractions.

X cleansed the Temple, because worshiping God is the  
most important thing those people, or we, can/will  
ever do.

This building we are in is not a sacred structure like the  
Jewish Temple.

But when God's people gather to worship Him, they  
together become a Temple of God, indwelt by the  
H.S. (I Cor 3:18).

**We live in an irreverent age, in which reverence, even in the  
worship of God, is rare.**

Some time ago, in our Sunday School class, we saw a video of a  
megachurch service which began w/ "worshippers" hitting  
beach balls to one another over their heads, as they sat in  
their chairs.

It was all fun/games, but I would bet, the Jesus who drove  
sheep out of the Temple, wouldn't have been pleased.

X demands reverence in our worship of His Father (not formality,  
but reverent hearts that love Him and seek to honor Him).

The music we sing, the prayers we pray, the sermons we preach, and the conversations we hold w/ one another in a worship service, must never become irreverent. Most importantly, reverence must characterize our prayers and the attitudes in our hearts.

In Eccl 5, Solomon wrote=> *“Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. / Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few”* (5:1f).

The church is where God’s people gather, to find rest/peace for their souls in the light of His goodness, as they worship Him together.

There’s no other place where they can do that, in a reverent, God-honoring environment.

So let’s turn our hearts towards our Lord, exclude every other thought from our minds, & let the things of this world fade away, as we focus on His power/glory/grace.

## ***“Jesus’ Consuming Zeal”***

March 3, 2013

Text: John 2:12-17

1. What could people like the disciples have seen and heard in Jesus that caused them to follow Him? As we will see in today’s text, it was His [12 power].  
Isa 53:2; 42:2-3; Lk 4:30; Jn 18:4-6

2. **As the account of Jesus’ cleansing the Temple unfolds, we see His pilgrimage to Jerusalem, His purification of the Temple, and His passion for [20 reverence] in worship...**

### **\* Jesus’ Pilgrimage to Jerusalem**

**[John 2:12-13]**

Mt 17:27; 4:13

3. Jesus had first visited the Temple when He was twelve; but being a devout and faithful Jew, He had undoubtedly come there every year since then for [20 Passover].

4. Jesus came to cleanse the Temple of the spiritual leaven of greed and irreverence that was [18 defiling] it.

### **\* Jesus’ Purification of the Temple**

**[Verse 14]**

5. When God had originally designed the Temple, He intended the outermost court to be where all the world would learn about Him, and come to love, [16 worship], and serve Him.

Isa 56:6-7

6. You can clearly see why Jesus would be appalled and angered by this commercialization of His Father’s house; the outer court was the only place a non-Jew could have any sense of [12 God’s] sacred presence.

**[Verse 15]**

7. No one lifted a finger to arrest Jesus—such was the [12 power] of His presence.

**[Verse 16]**

Mt 23:38

8. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will again return to the Temple in Jerusalem and cleanse it one last time; that will be the final fulfillment of [20 Malachi's] prophecy.

Mal 3:1-2

**\* Jesus' Passion for Reverent Worship**

**[Verse 17]**

Psa 69:9

9. When we take David's words and apply them to Christ, they mean that He too was on fire with zeal for the sanctity and purity of God's house and the [16 worship] of Him that occurred there.

Jer 20:9

10. Jesus was filled with the same righteous indignation that caused [12 Moses] to shatter and destroy the two tablets of the Law when he discovered Israel worshiping the golden calf.

Ex 32:19; Acts 17:16; I Cor 11:27

11. Christ cleansed the Temple because worshiping God is the most important thing those people, or [6 we], can ever do.

Ecc 5:1-2

12. The church is where God's people gather to find rest and peace for their souls in the light of His goodness as they [16 worship] together.