



# Immanuel Lutheran Church

*Transcript from March 7, 2021 sermon preached by Rev. Tab Ottmers*

The text for our sermon this morning is the Gospel reading just read, and also the Epistle--keeping these words in mind--from the Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greek seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ's the power of God and the wisdom of God." And also in the Gospel, verse 15, "and making a whip of cords, Jesus drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep, and oxen, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and over chain overturned their tables." God's grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Last week, Jesus rebuked Peter, because Peter stood in front of Jesus when Jesus preached the gospel, when Jesus preached the truth. He said, The Son of Man was going to be handed over beaten and crucified. Jesus was to be treated as the worst villain in the history of all mankind. And Peter said, "No way, Lord." Jesus is going to give His life for His enemies to be spared. Peter said, "No." Today we hear of a Jesus who sounds a little more like a villain. Last week, we contemplated on who the true villain is and how we as the enemies of God, are turned into his friends by the death of Christ given to us through faith. Today, Jesus sounds a bit more villainous. In fact, Jesus sounds like a big meanie! Mean guy! He isn't that nice, fun loving hippie who wears sandals and socks, that so many people picture in our day. Today, when He comes to the temple, Jesus flips over tables. And He makes a whip. And mind you, He doesn't just use the whip on the animals. He uses it on the people. This is not a Jesus most people think of when they consider, "who do I think Jesus is?" Usually, when we picture Jesus, it's more along the lines of a friend who's there when you need him, and he kind of never disagrees with all your great ideas. He's always just there telling you, "Yeah. As long as you do a good job, it's okay." But not today. Today, Jesus, He seems rather different.

Well, not really different. Jesus is loving. He's just showing it in a strange way today. He's showing it in a way we would probably rather not think about. Today, flipping over tables, making a whip, take these things away, He said. Do not make my father's house, a house of trade. That same voice that thundered on Sinai from our Exodus reading today, the voice that the psalmist says strips the forest bare. Today, Jesus doesn't really fit with what we may think of when someone asks us, "who do you think Jesus is?" It's not exactly good news for us that Jesus takes sin seriously.

What about the neighbors? What about all the people walking by the temple that day? What if they see Him yelling and raising His voice? What if they hear the crack of the whip? What are all the people and witnesses going to think of our Jesus? Maybe He's like a certain politician and we need to hide Him away. We don't want Him to embarrass Himself. But when the truth is at stake, Jesus doesn't really care



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about what others think. When it's our lives at stake, Jesus doesn't care--He will do whatever it takes to cleanse.

It's worthy to note that Jesus is in the temple and what time of year it is. It is the Passover, and Jesus is wanting to correct false teaching. Jesus is wanting to teach the people who are gathered in the temple. The people outside the temple, well, they don't really care. And Jesus isn't too worried about His public image. Jesus isn't too worried about His reputation. Jesus is worried about the truth. Those outside the temple--I don't want to say they're not really His concern, but their opinion doesn't really matter to Him. They are lost. They're the blind. Jesus is among the religious people. And what does He find them doing? Oh, pretty religious things, of course. But what religion? It was the Passover, and Jerusalem would have been hopping mad with people; think about going to the mall on Black Friday. It would be easy to just evaluate everything in Jerusalem going on, seeing all the people there gathered and think, "this is a great thing! Everybody is very concerned about the Passover, a holy day, a national holiday for the nation. Isn't it great that so many people care?"

But now Jesus comes and messes it all up. Jesus is pretty good at messing things up. If you remember, like a child getting caught playing with matches by mom or dad. Or your parents foiling your plans that you made to run away, you had everything lined up just right, and they come and mess it all up. The thoughts of our hearts towards others. Jesus, He can't just sit back and leave well enough alone, He has to come and mess it up. He has to open His mouth. And on top of that, He flips the tables over--makes a scene. Psalm 4:4 says, "Be angry and do not sin." Today, Jesus is angry. Jesus is angry because, well, He loves us too much to just sit back and let us sit in our sins.

The temple was the place where sacrifices were offered. They were handed over to the priests to announce forgiveness to the one who brought it. The locals there they realized, well, people are traveling from all over they can't very well bring their own sacrifices. So they had a market. There was a need and they saw an opportunity. As they provided the sacrifices for sale, there was a markup of course. You can't very well expect us just to give these things away for free. The whole teaching that God had set up in the Old Testament, the whole teaching surrounding the temple and the sacrifices that was all meant to point to Jesus and His sacrifice. But sacrifices had developed just into what you did. Sacrifices were done because, well, that's just what you do. And the scene was all about giving to God. And well, a little money was made in the process. The disciples, we are told, they remember the passage that Jesus is consumed with zeal for his father's house. But that zeal was for his father's house, because that's where God's people are taught the truth. Where they are being taken care of. The point of the sacrifice was not that God needs anything from us, but that we need something from him. And, unfortunately, the exchange and the temple the buying and selling of sacrifices had taken away from the very gospel. The religion of the people had become just going through the motions. And God is not okay with that.



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Jesus doesn't have a zeal for his father's house because the temple was so beautiful. The disciples point out how beautiful the temple was, and Jesus says, not one of it will be left on top. Not one stone will be left on top of another. It will all be destroyed. The zeal that Jesus has for his father's house is to be a place not where man benefits from things of this world. But where the eternal gifts are given out. The zeal Jesus has for his father's house is not so that we would give to God--that is part of it--but that God being rich in his mercy has something to give you. Where God is not the primary recipient, but man is the recipient of God's forgiveness. That we would see and hear of God's gracious forgiveness. That by repentance of our sins, and hearing the gospel, we see that God provides the sacrifice. This had been what God had preached throughout all the Old Testament. This is why the psalmist can say, "Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of the wicked." Well, what happens when the wicked dwell when the tents of the Lord?

Forgiveness had been turned into a business. And no one really cared. God's house had become a place of comfort. The glorious dwelling of God among his people, his very presence had just kind of become kind of ordinary. You didn't act any different in God's house than you did in your own house, or outside among your friends. People no longer believed they needed anything from God. And just that, well, God kind of owes me if I show up. I deserve it. They checked the box, they offered the sacrifice and everything was good, no need to change your life. No need to repent. No need for a savior. For you had your exchange, you did your duty. So as you take a look how we approach God's house today, we do good to reflect on why we are here. Does God need anything from you? Are you just checking the box? Maybe we need Jesus to flip our tables a little more regularly than we realize. To whip our false notion of who he is, and who we are and what love really looks like. For Jesus is not content to let you sit in your sins. We don't need someone to turn a blind eye to our sin, but a merciful Savior, a God who loves us enough to rebuke us to send his law. We need to love that shows us that we've built our own houses of trade.

We've built our own houses of trade, and I'm not talking about our beautiful sanctuary. But we've built places where we try to dwell where we try to find our comfort and money, that as long as we do what the government and doctors tell us, well, we'll be okay. Or maybe something has happened to you, that you realize all the things you've put your hope in this world have turned out to be a house of cards. We need a love that cuts us so that we would heal. We need the love and compassion of a God who sends his law to kill us to open our ears so that he would make us alive. Not by being good enough, or getting our houses in order, but a God who kills us so that he can make us alive. St. Paul says that is the gospel, the power of the gospel, the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, because in the end, the zeal that Jesus has for the temple of stones-- it's not really for the temple at all. To remember that you are his temple. His zeal is that he may forgive you all your sins, that he would tear down His own body, and that his zeal is for you to be his dwelling place. His zeal is that you live, even if that means he is driven out of his father's gracious presence, when he is crucified dead, that there Jesus is building you into his temple, that he would receive the whip of God's law at the hand of the Roman soldiers, so that you may dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The zeal Jesus has to cleanse the temple is to cleanse you and



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me. That the cross is where God makes the exchange for you. That he does the buying, he does the purchasing that he purchases he purchases you from your own sin. He buys you, if you will, from the devil. What was the payment? Well, how can you possibly pay more than the blood of Christ?

There is an exchange that happens today in God's house. God takes all your sins and He gives you forgiveness--for free. That is his zeal. He cleanses you. This is what consumes him because his Holy Spirit works through the word and sacrament. This is his zeal. And would we be just as zealous to receive that cleansing? That restoring? St. Paul tells us in the second reading, his word and sacraments, they drive out all the wickedness that dwells in you the gospel, he chases out all that doesn't belong in you. For You are the dwelling place of Christ. Do you not know that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit? His Word is preached and that powerful word will sustain your faith when life seems to be falling all around you.

Sure, life will be difficult. Our Lord disciplines those whom he loves. Our Lord is not afraid to turn our tables to raise his voice. But it's all because he has a zeal for you. A zeal for you, that he would sanctify you. That he makes you holy. And then we in turn, not only have a zeal for God's house, but a zeal for one another--for helping each other. Not driving one another away, but in the power of God, foolishness to the world a stumbling block to the world but for us it is the power of God unto salvation.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.