

I Will Raise
December 18, 2022
Allen Power

John 2:13-23

Opening illustration: Bill Gaither and the popcorn vendors.

Question: What distracts you in the worship service? Any examples?

In this morning's familiar text Jesus took a bold and forceful approach to removing the things that distracted people from worship, but we will see much more than that. This text brings up a lot of questions:

- Why was Jesus so mad? What is righteous indignation?
- How should "zeal" for the things of God "consume us?"
- How does "cleansing the temple" apply to the "new temple" today?
- What was symbolic about the location of the commotion?
- What does this text say about putting money over people?
- What is the important message of this incident as a "sign" about Jesus?

The point: Everything Jesus did in his earthly ministry honored His Heavenly Father. That should be the goal of every follower of Christ today.

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."

- This scene took place in a part of the temple complex called the "court of the Gentiles." This was the outer ring where Gentiles were allowed to come and pray to the God of Abraham. Only Jews could go further.
- We might assume the temple authorities considered this a less important area so they justified putting these moneychangers and merchants there.
- *"So what if it's noisy and chaotic where the Gentiles pray. These vendors provide a necessary service for those coming from afar. Those Gentiles are lucky we even let them near the temple!"* More about that shortly.
- The temple authorities justified the merchants as providing a necessary service for those who came a long distance to bring sacrifices. They needed to exchange foreign currency. It was convenient to buy animals for sacrifices onsite instead of transporting them a far distance.
- The story of Jesus clearing out the temple appears in all the gospels. Whether one incident or two look at what Jesus said in each version:

- In this passage: *“Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”*
- In the other gospels, variations of: *“It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.”*ⁱ
- Was it a necessary service or exploitation? How much do you pay for bottled water at the grocery store? At a theme park or stadium? Why?
- Some churches have ATMs in the foyer so people can give in cash. What if a row of ATMs was installed in the worship center? People get hungry. What if sandwich vending machines were installed where we pray and worship? People need to give. People gotta eat! What’s the real issue?
- What started as a convenience to facilitate worship became a racket.
- The temple authorities were not concerned about whether those Gentiles had a quiet place for prayer; they were focused on money over people.
- Church leaders may justify decisions by saying: *“We have to pay the bills!”*
- Jesus said, *“...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* (Matt. 6:33)
- Ministries are called to be wise stewards of His resources but not big business, moneymaking machines.
- The fact that the merchants were allowed to set up in the “court of the Gentiles” is also symbolic. Jesus had quoted **Isaiah 56:7 (ESV)** — *“...my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”* (Emphasis mine)
- Jesus came so that both Jew and Gentile can have relationship with God.
- Clearing out the merchants made way for the Gentiles to worship God. When He died on the cross He cleared the way for all people to be saved.
- What can we learn from Jesus’ anger? Referring to this incident, Albert Mohler described Jesus as less like the “gentle Jesus meek and mild” image and more like “Clint Eastwood!” [*“Get out of my temple!”*]
- Why was Jesus so mad? Anger issues? Too much Jerry Springer?
- You can learn a lot about a person by what makes them laugh, what makes them cry, and what makes them angry.
- Ephesians 4:26 says, *“Be angry and do not sin...”* Jesus was sinless. Why was His anger appropriate? How can we be angry and not sin?
- Jesus’ anger was directed at sin. He didn’t display a pattern of anger, it was short-lived and to accomplish a specific purpose. Scripture never says he hurt the animals or merchants. He just cleaned out the place.
- One commentator writes: *“We can know for sure that our anger or indignation is righteous when it is directed toward what angers God Himself... Believers can also channel their anger into constructive action by becoming involved with Christian organizations that combat the influence of evil in society...if our outrage results in bringing others into a loving and restorative relationship with God, it’s righteous indignation.”*ⁱⁱ
- His disciples connected Jesus’ anger and forceful action with Psalm 69:9: *“zeal for your house has consumed me...”*ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus zeal was for the things of God in general, but in this case the problem was in God’s “house.”

- Zeal is defined as: “A single-minded desire, characterized by enthusiasm and devotion. Misdirected or inappropriate zeal can degenerate into fanaticism.”^{iv} Zeal is not a “one day a week” proposition; it’s a lifestyle.
- How did Saul/Paul’s zeal go from bad to best? What made the difference?
- How can I know if my zeal is godly or misguided?
- Godly zeal is passionate desire for what God desires based on His word.
- One example: Harsh, angry “professed” Christians. They may be “right” on the issues but unbiblical in how they express their zeal. Let’s go back to the worship center. Jesus said, **Matthew 5:23–24 (ESV) — 23** So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
- Feuding Christians on social media might need to check their zeal!
- Let’s look at a bigger theological truth revealed starting in verse eighteen:

18 So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?”

- The temple authorities challenged Jesus: “*Who do you think you are?*”
- They challenged His authority and asked for a “sign” to verify it.
- Jesus gave an indirect but important answer:

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.

- When Jesus rose from the dead He became God’s true temple on earth.
- **Colossians 1:15 (ESV) — 15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- When Jesus ascended to Heaven He gave us His Spirit on earth.
- The temple is nowhere to be found in Jerusalem today. Where is the temple of God today? Where does His presence reside on earth?
- **1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV) — 16** Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?
- **1 Peter 2:5 (ESV) — 5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- How can God’s temple (our hearts) become like that cluttered and chaotic court of the Gentiles? How does He “cleanse” that temple today?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- There are a lot of “takeaways” in this text.

- Everything Jesus did in his earthly ministry honored His Heavenly Father. That should be the goal of every follower of Christ today.
- Because of Jesus' dramatic action at the temple court, Gentiles would be able to worship God in reverence even if only for a day. Because of His death and resurrection, all people can be a temple for His Spirit.
- Jesus also demonstrated that in God's economy, people are more important than money. Ministries are called to be wise stewards of His resources but not big business, moneymaking machines.
- Jesus also demonstrated the difference between uncontrolled, selfish anger and righteous indignation.
- We should rejoice at what pleases God, weep about what breaks His heart, and be angry about what angers Him.
- How we handle our anger can be biblical or unbiblical. We are to be angry at sin and channel that anger constructively. Jesus also taught us to "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...*"^v
- Christ's followers need to display the right kind of zeal for Him and His word. We're to be salt and light, not angry "Clint Eastwood" Christians.
- The final takeaway is to pay attention to the things that clutter our hearts and hinder our worship of God. They may not be bad things on the surface but taken to an extreme they can distract us from Him.
- This week, let's ask Him to help us see the clutter in our relationship with Him and to cleanse the temples of our hearts of those things that distract from worshiping Him with passion and obeying His word with consistency.

ⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 19:46). Wheaton, IL:

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/righteous-indignation-anger.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Ps 69:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{iv} Manser, M. H. (2009). [*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*](#). London: Martin Manser.

^v [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 5:44). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.