

Cleaning House; making room for Jesus' habitation in your heart

John 2:13-22

MPS: Jesus reveals God's work in salvation that we might know it's all about Him.

OBJ: Every person should believe in Jesus because of three reasons.

INTRO I saw a church sign this past week that read: "I am going to stand outside. If anyone asks, I'm outstanding." I fail to understand how any church would feel this in any way could "help". However, it is easy for us to begin to feel this way. There's something within us that continually tempts us to believe, "I'm outstanding." But the gospel tells us a different story. And this is the story we must continually tell ourselves, and others. The story that must continually be our testimony. The story of the One who was taken outside the city, and stood up on a cross for us, so that we don't have to be outstanding. That's what I want us to look at today.

READ John 2:13-22

*The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 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. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 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. **John 2:13-22***

As we saw last week, anything can inebriate us and distract us from experiencing the real power of God at work around us. Today's passage parallels last week's. We see that we often make Christianity about everything other than what it is really about. But thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ He makes a way for us to know and abide in Him.

Jesus reveals God's work in salvation that we might know it's all about Him.

TRANS Speaking of salvation being all about Jesus, we begin with The Passover feast.

The Passover

John records that Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Passover was an annual festival that celebrated God's provision to save his people from the angel of death, during the tenth plague in Egypt, by placing blood over their doorposts. Most returned to Jerusalem for this annual celebration.

When they arrived in the temple, Jesus found things he did not like. People were selling animals for sacrifice in the temple. John records that Jesus made a whip, and then he cleaned house. He drove out the animals, poured out the money, overturned tables, and ordered the people with pigeons to get out as well. His only recorded words state, "*Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.*" And in these words we find his reasoning. He didn't want the Temple, the place of worship, to be turned into a market of commerce.

TRANS If we are to understand Jesus' response, we must ask why people were selling in the first place.

Many people traveled to Jerusalem for Passover, one of three required, annual festivals for all Jewish men.¹ The Law required specific animals to be offered for worship. But due to the great distance that some were required to travel, the

¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 104. "The Passover was one of the three annual pilgrim feasts that all Jewish men were to celebrate in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16)."



Law (Old Testament) allowed for people to sell their livestock because the journey was so long and it would not be practical to bring animals that great distance. Once they arrived they would use the money to purchase an animal for sacrifice when they arrived at the Temple.² The people selling animals represented a legitimate business in serving people who traveled great distances.

The Temple had a specific economy. The Tyrian coin was the only acceptable currency, chosen because of its high purity of silver. Many people came from different places with different forms of currency. So, they would take the money from selling their livestock and convert it to the proper currency. This could be done at the Temple for a small fee. Due to exchange values, people would often go together to exchange currency.³ Once they had exchanged their money, they could pay their Temple tax and purchase the animals they needed for sacrifice.

There is evidence of corruption in this Temple economy. Matthew (21:13) records that Jesus referred to it as a “*den of robbers*”. Caiaphas, the High Priest, was in charge of this “market”. He was the son-in-law of Annas, the former High Priest and now what you might call “High Priest Emeritus”. Annas and Caiaphas would later be the ones to interrogate Jesus and hand him over to the Jews.⁴ Scripture does not reflect this duo having the utmost integrity. One can easily imagine what it might’ve been like with the many available “points” for exploitation by opportunistic people. As much as it pains me to say it, it seems the modern day “Payday Loans” type joints got their business model from religious leaders in the first century. They target situations where people cannot afford to do any different, then exploit and rob them in their weakness.

The disciples were moved by witnessing all this. John records “*His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’*” The reference from Psalm 69:9 forms the psalmist’s lament toward the opposition he has experienced from his enemies, and his strong desire for God’s house. How could they forget this image just emblazoned in their mind. But, the disciples obviously saw this psalm fulfilled in Jesus. This would only be a small representation of Jesus’ true zeal for pure worship that would consume him.

Jesus didn’t like what he found in the Temple. D.A. Carson comments, “Jesus’ cleansing of the temple testifies to his concern for pure worship, a right relationship with God at the place supremely designated to serve as the focal point of that relationship between God and man.”⁵ Jesus held one focus, ensuring that people didn’t have to overcome additional, unnecessary barriers for access to God. And this one focus increasingly consumed him. Craig Keener states, “Jesus insists on a different priority for activity in the temple; cf. Malachi 3:1–6.”⁶ [Jesus destroys false worship and forms of religion to clarify the one, true way to a right relationship with God.](#)

TRANS This was obviously a difficult thing to not notice, so the Jews addressed Jesus.

The Jews address Jesus. They ask what sign he would show them to justify his actions in cleansing the Temple. This is understandable for them to ask for a couple of reasons. First, the Jews claimed to be awaiting the Messiah. And, it is possible, that at least to some degree, they knew the prophecies of his appearing. Second, they were in charge of what was taking place. And all of it was legitimate commerce, though not necessarily on the up-and-up. According to Paul, Jews always demand a sign. (1 Cor 1:22) [Signs prove the person of Jesus is the Christ, but that doesn’t mean you can’t miss the point.](#)

Jesus points to the biggest object lesson present. He tells them to tear down the Temple and that He will rebuild it in

² See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 105.

³ See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 178.

⁴ See D. R. Hall, “Annas,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 49.

⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 180.

⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Jn 2:15–16.



three days. Considering the Temple they stood in was forty-six years in the making and still not finished, it is understandable how they struggled to get his meaning. But John points out that their biggest problem was that they totally missed his meaning. Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body. His disciples likely missed it in the moment too, but not completely. John then tells us, *“When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered what he said and believed the Scripture and word the Jesus had spoken.”*

Jesus clarifies real authority. The question posed to Jesus strikes at the heart of the real issue, authority. When Jesus answered his questioners, he didn't speak of earthly or immediate authority only, though he had just demonstrated it. Rather, he clarified His authority as ultimate over life and death. **Jesus' power over life and death proves that His authority is ultimate, but some still deny and miss it.**

Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of religion. The religious leaders honored God on the outside while their hearts remain far from Him. (Matt 15:7-8) Matthew 23 records a litany of woes to religious leaders. They preach one thing, but practice another. (23:3) They put heavy burdens on people, but give them no help. (23:4) They do all their deeds to be seen by others. (23:5) They shut the Kingdom in people's faces. (23:13) Their gospel is twice as damning on the souls of people. (23:15) They reverse everything that honors God to value unrighteousness above all. (23:16-22) They practice religion, supposed love for God, with no regard for other people. (23:23-24) They are clean-washed on the outside, but totally unkept on the inside. (23:25-26) They outwardly appear 'all put together', but inwardly they hold nothing but death like a tomb. (23:27-28) They build make every claim of righteousness and celebrate “the good ole days” of yesteryear, but only crush the work of God in their own time. (23:29-36) The rationale of the religious leaders makes one thing clear, they chose unbelief. (Matt 21:26-25-27) **A mind set on worldly and fleshly glory will never see nor comprehend spiritual truths, nor believe any sign to receive eternal life.**

Ultimately Jesus says, *“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”* (Matt 16:4) A person is defiled by what comes out of the heart. (Matt 15:18-20) We are no different from the Pharisees. We do the same things the Pharisees and Sadducees were condemned for. We are religious to the core. We deny Jesus so we can exalt self with worldly glory. Our heart is blind by religious unbelief toward God's work and power in Jesus Christ. **But Jesus cleans the house of our heart that He might inhabit us with the light of His righteousness that is true life.**

What we witness in John 2 demonstrates what we see throughout the gospels. The tension and conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders increases all the way to his crucifixion. But Jesus never stops teaching and demonstrating what we see here, either. Jesus is cleaning house! He tears down everything that stands between people and God. He purges everything that misrepresents God's desire, intention and work in salvation. He shows that God is making a way for people to rightly relate to Him in salvation.

Jesus reveals God's work in salvation that we might know it's all about Him.

TRANS John's purpose for writing and why he records this event is most important for our understanding. He writes to persuade us to believe. And, he shows how it is that some believed, the disciples, and others did not, even though they both witnessed the same event and had the same knowledge.

OBJ: This passage provides **three reasons** that every person should believe in Jesus. And, for all who have believed, these reasons provide **three keys for a clean heart** that welcomes and cultivates Jesus' habitation within us.

TRANS John compels us to believe because of...

Reason #1: The work of God in pursuing you, that is all around you.

Don't miss this: Jesus is the acting agent here. John tells us that Jesus performed “signs” that we might believe in Him. This must not be overlooked **Jesus is the one most passionate and pursuing of our right relationship with God.**



The real problem in this text that Jesus addresses is that they've filled the real-ness of relationship with God with everything else in life. And there is no doubt, much of it is the good stuff of life. But even good stuff becomes bad when it busies us and distracts from God's work. The chaos of the Temple commerce, which was not wrong in and of itself, was just as distracting as the wedding's wine was inebriating, causing people to miss God's work so they could believe in Him. [We miss God's work when we allow the things of life to busy and distract us, but putting them where they should never be, or valuing them in ways they were not intended.](#)

Jesus cleans out the religious activity of our hearts and lives. He confronts the religiosity of our heart to show that it opposes God's true intention for relationship with Him. Once caught up by religion, or by other things that we practice "religiously", we begin to substitute a legitimate 'seeking after' God with hollow activity that we label with God. And we become occupied and consumed until we wake up to the exhaustion of our "religion". [Jesus' zeal that consumed Him was for your heart, so you can commune w/ God.](#)

Nothing we do matters if Christ is not at the center. But until you recognize the hollow-ness, you can get easily caught up in the activity and busyness. [Jesus' cleanses our religious commerce that he might build true communion with God.](#)

[God is working all around us in Jesus to pursue us for a personal relationship.](#)

TRANS John compels us to believe because of...

Reason #2: The witness of God's Word in you.

Believing Jesus to follow Him begins in His Word. In both instances the disciples understood who Jesus was and what He was doing by this, they "*remembered*" what was written (.17) and what He had said (.22).

The Word the disciples remembered was alive right in front of them. Jesus' work is always a living revelation of the God's Word. That's why John said, "the Word became flesh and made His dwelt among us." (1:14) When the Word of God lives in you, the Word is alive working in you. What you see is not just a matter of what is in front of you, but even more so, what is inside of you because of what God has said. [God bears witness TO us of His work FOR us by His Word that is alive IN us through Jesus, the living word of God made flesh.](#)

The Pharisees had the same word the disciples remembered. D.A. Carson reminds us, "Indeed, if the authorities had eyes to see, the cleansing of the temple was already a 'sign' they should have thought through and deciphered in terms of Old Testament Scripture."⁷ It's one thing to read and know the Word. But it's a whole other thing to let the Word read and know you. That's the difference between the Pharisees and the disciples in this passage. The disciples saw and understood all of life through the "lens" of God's Word because they believed Jesus. And that's the difference between whether God's Word is alive in you to make any difference on a daily basis with all that goes on around you. [The work of Jesus made sense to and led the disciples to believe in Jesus because they remembered God's Word.](#)

"Remember" is also God's work. Holy Spirit, the ever-abiding presence of Jesus in us, brings to remembrance God's Word and Helps us. (John 14:25-26) Jesus works around us to show God's saving work for us, and he works within us to brings to remembrance what He's said to us. [God bears continual and effectual witness to us of His saving work for us through His Word that we might believe in Jesus and receive eternal life.](#)

We have all we need to believe and follow Jesus.

- ? [Are you hung up on demanding something more from Jesus, before you believe or follow?](#)
- ? [Have you become blind or deaf to God's witness in your life by other things you've busied or occupied your life with?](#)

⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 181.



Guard yourself, that God's Word is not taken in like a 'tic tac' to freshen things up in the moment, but quickly gone. Rather, receive it like a vitamin that continually commands the mind and strengthens the heart for the long haul. If you want to see the work of God in your life, and recognize Jesus in His work, you must know the Word of God and have Him alive in you. All that you take in on any given day is for MORE THAN just that day. [The living Word of God strengthens and sustains one for the daily living of eternal life.](#)

TRANS John compels us to believe because of...

Reason #3: The crucifixion of the One who is God for you.

We live in a most blessed time, in the reality of looking back on what the disciples only later came to fully understand. Jesus would be crucified for our sin so we could be welcomed into the presence of God. He IS the Temple, and in Him we become the Temple of the living God.

We must learn that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the key for all things in this life. When we seek God to satisfy our demands (questions, concerns, etc) MORE THAN we seek His Will, we will always interpret and understand things through our perspective, and miss God's work. But spiritual truths must be spiritually discerned. We must rely on the Word and Spirit in order to see and understand God's work all around us. [Christians must learn to see and understand all things through the finished work of Jesus on the cross.](#)

Religion imposes meaning on rituals, actions that claim to accomplish some work. Through the action, religion claims, God's grace comes. So, baptism bestows grace, communion transfers grace, and confession met with assigned prayers, incantations and formulaic prescriptions bring forgiveness. Yes, there were strict ritual that God commanded His people to perform in the Old Testament, but even then the people understood that the ritual practice did not save, but only served to remind them of sins, not take them away. (Heb 10:1-4) Religious ritual has never been God's method for removing sin or the mode of relationship with Him. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law. Anything that disses, dismisses or doesn't center on Him is idolatry. [Religion may occupy and satisfy for a time, but only Jesus saves.](#)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ gives meaning to all things. This is why the gospel is so transforming. IF Christians are to understand all that God is doing, we have to look at every moment in "the light of the cross". We must look to God to understand and see His redeeming work. Whether in good times, times of great need or suffering, Jesus gives glorious meaning and purpose to our lives through the gospel. We must believe it, learn it, understand it and apply it to all of life. [Life is not about trying to make sense of God, but about the gospel making sense of all things for God's glory.](#)

So when you came in this morning,

- ? What was first on your heart and mind? What did you carry in with you?
- ? Are you running around today trying to figure everything out today?
 - o Or, are you here to meet with Jesus, to trust in Him, and to cast all your cares on Him and let His care for you be the perfect salve and only for your soul?

