

Sunday Morning Message

March 27, 2022

The First Cleansing of the Temple

The Gospel According to John

Text – John 2:12 - 25

Congregational Reading – John 2:13 - 25

Introduction (vs. 12 – 13)

Today we will follow the Lord Jesus as he travels from Cana to Capernaum (v. 12; approximately 18 miles). The verse tells us that Jesus did not stay there many days, because he wanted to travel to Jerusalem (approximately 90 miles) in order to be there for the Passover (v. 13).



Note – Verse 12 tells us that Jesus went “down” to Capernaum which is a reference to elevation. The same is true in verse 13 when He goes “up” to Jerusalem. It was Jesus custom to travel to Jerusalem every year for the Passover. There are at least 4 Passovers referred to in Scripture after the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry.

Facts about Capernaum

- 1 Jesus will live there for a time and it becomes the central focus, His headquarters, for His ministry in Galilee.
- 2 He will strongly rebuke the city (Matthew 11:20 – 24) and the surrounding area for not repenting even though He had done “mighty works there.”
- 3 Peter, Andrew, James, and John will be called to follow Jesus from here (Matthew 4:18 – 22; Mark 1:16 – 20).
- 4 Jesus preaches from Peter’s boat, and causes the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5:1 – 11).
- 5 Matthew will be called from here (Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:13 – 14; Luke 5:27 – 28).
- 6 Peter’s mother – in – law will be healed of a fever here (Matthew 8:14 – 15; 1:29 – 31; 4:38 – 39).
- 7 The centurion’s servant is healed here (Matthew 8:5 – 13; Luke 7:1 – 10).
- 8 The daughter of Jairus was raised here (Matthew 9:18 – 26; Mark 5:22 – 43; Luke 8:40 – 56).
- 9 He cast out an unclean spirit here (Mark 1:21 – 28; Luke 4:33 – 37).
- 10 He used children to teach humility here (Matthew 18:1 – 5; Mark 9:33 – 37; Luke 9:46 – 48).

Explain the Passover

- 1 The Passover is instituted in Exodus 12 when the people were in Egypt and according to Deuteronomy 16:5 – 6, the Passover was to held at a place that God chooses, which eventually became Jerusalem. It commemorated God’s deliverance of the Nation of Israel from their bondage in Egypt.
- 2 The Passover was observed during the wilderness wanderings.
- 3 Joshua observed the Passover on the plains of Jericho.
- 4 Every male over twelve was commanded in the Law to “appear before the Lord” three times in the year, and one of these times was the Passover (Exodus 23:14 – 17)

- 5 Hezekiah signed a decree declaring that the Passover will be observed always in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 30:4 – 5)
- 6 After the captivity the Passover was once again observed in Jerusalem.
- 7 Jesus parents travelled to Jerusalem every year according to Luke 2:41.
- 8 At the Passover, the City of Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims who made the annual trip to be there.

I. The Purging of the Temple (vs. 14 – 17)

Once He arrived in Jerusalem, He visited the temple (v 14), and He was not pleased with what He saw:

Note – this is not the same event that we will see later in Matthew 21; Mark 11; and Luke 19. In those accounts He does the same thing; but it occurs at the end of His public ministry; not the beginning as in this account.

“those that sold oxen and sheep and doves” – These animals were used for sacrifices. The priests had figured out a way to profit from worship. They were in the business of selling these animals. No doubt, people were discouraged and maybe even forbidden from bringing their own sacrifices, but were forced to pay the high price at the market in the temple.

“the changers of money” – People were forced to exchange Roman money or other items for “temple money”. The people were required to pay a half-shekel temple tax.

The bottom line is that the priesthood had become so corrupt that their bottom line was money. They had figured out ways to profit from everything. In more recent times there has been the same problem. (i.e. the “sale of indulgences”; and even more recently the selling of “prayer cloths”)

This brings us to a question that we must face here at the church. Is it wrong to sell things here? I think the answer of it lies in our motivation. If our intent in the selling of an item is to profit from the people, then it is wrong; but if the primary intent is to get the materials into the hands of the people, then it is not. When the church becomes all about money, and not all about ministry, then I think that we need to examine what we have become; but having said that, we also realize that it takes money to operate a ministry.

What does Jesus do about what He sees? (vs. 15 – 16)

The Bible plainly teaches that *the love of money is the root of all evil* (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus stated later that *[you] cannot serve God and mammon*. (Matthew 6:24) Money is ok if you can control it and use it for the glory of God; but when money controls you, then something must be done.

Verse 17 is a reference to Psalm 69:9:

"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." (Psalm 69:9)

II. His Prophecy and Proof (vs. 18 – 22)

In verses 18 – 22, the Jews ask Him about His authority. They wanted proof that He was who He claimed to be. Jesus always pointed to the resurrection as the ultimate “sign” that He was who He claimed to be:

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:38-42)

Notice the reference to forty-six years in v. 20. This is likely a reference to Herod's rebuilding of the Temple, which began around 20 B.C. The Temple was originally built by Solomon. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and was rebuilt after the captivity by Zerubbabel and others in 516 B.C. Herod did a remodel and expansion on the Temple, and it was still being worked on during the time of Christ.

His enemies would distort Jesus' words here when they bring Him before the Sanhedren:

"And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together." (Mark 14:57-59)

III. The People (vs. 23 – 25)

In verses 23 – 25, we see that many saw His miracles and “believed”; but He did not “commit himself unto them”

The words “believed” (ἐπίστευσαν from πιστεύω – *pisteuō* – Aorist, Active, Indicative, 3rd Per. Plural), and “commit” (ἐπίστευεν from πιστεύω – *pisteuō* - Imperfect, Active, Indicative, 3rd Per. Sing.) both come from the same Greek verb - πιστεύω – *pisteuō*. Basically, we have a play on words here. The people believed in that moment, but they did not continue trusting in Christ. Jesus knew their hearts, so He did not commit Himself to them.

The key to understanding this is found in the phrase “when they saw the miracles which he did.” The people believed that the miracles were genuine and so did the religious leaders. Nobody in that day denied the miracles that Christ performed. The religious leaders would later claim that His miracles were done through satanic power (Beelzebub), but they did not deny the reality of the miracles. These people believed that Jesus had power, but they did not commit themselves to Him. This was not saving faith. Saving faith involves more than just a momentary intellectual assent to facts. It involves a commitment to keep following Christ.

What Jesus was saying here is that He did not accept their acceptance of Him at this time as their acceptance of Him as their Messiah. He knew that His own would not receive Him:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" (John 1:12)

Now, of course, within this crowd there would also be people who did trust in Him, and would continue to believe on Him and follow Him, but the crowd, in general, was very fickle. This same crowd would shout out Hosannah at the Triumphal Entry, but then cry “crucify” a few days later.

Conclusion - Practical Truths

1 The believer’s body is now the temple of God.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1Corinthians 6:19-20)

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; (Acts 17:24)

- 2 The believer's soul was eternally cleansed by Christ's blood when he trusted Christ as Savior. ("*white as snow*" "*east from west*")
- 3 The believer's life needs to be cleansed daily through confession and holy living.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2Corinthians 7:1)

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:8)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)