

“The Jealous Love of Jesus” (Series #6)

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, for New Horizon URC, first service March 26, 2017

Text: John 2:12-25

Introduction: Jealousy can be something bad, or something good. For example, a boyfriend who get angry if his girlfriend ever talks with any male, any man---that’s a bad kind of jealousy. But think of a husband who cares not at all, if his wife goes out for dinner with another man. Or a boyfriend who is not concerned if his girlfriend is cheating on him. Some kind of “jealousy” for a wife’s affection is necessary. And it is good. This is the kind of jealousy which God shows, towards his people, Israel. In the Ten Commandments God says to His people: “You must have no other gods. Don’t bow down to them or serve them. For I am a jealous God.” That’s jealousy in the good sense. The NT word translated as “being jealous” can also be translated as “being zealous.” That is, being passionate about something. In the OT, God often compares himself to a committed, loving husband. He’s a husband who is rightfully jealous, or passionately zealous, for the affections of his wife. We, God’s covenant people, are compared to God’s wife.

Jesus shows us this aspect of Himself, and of His Father, in our text in John chapter 2.

In verse 17, John reminds us of a verse from Psalm 69.

That “zeal for the Lord’s house,” for the Temple, had “eaten up” Jesus.

Jesus was displaying loving jealousy for the right worship of God.

1. First, let’s look at the situation. The gospel-writer John tells us that this is the time of the Passover feast. The Passover was that annual celebration. The people celebrated how the LORD had delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. And, also, how the Lord saved them from that avenging Angel of Death. Remember how that Angel struck down the firstborn son of each Egyptian family? But, the Israelite homes, marked with the lamb’s blood, were passed over. The Angel of Death “passed over” or “passed by” the homes of the Israelites. So the feast is called “the Pass-over.”

As history went on, the Passover included many public sacrifices in the Temple area. By the time of the NT, the Passover had become a huge, public festival. Thousands of animals were slaughtered in and around the Temple. As Passover sacrifices. And, over the years, the merchants in Jerusalem came up with a plan. Instead of traveling Jewish people bringing their own animals, the merchants offered animals for sale. Sheep, cattle, doves—were sold and bought for sacrifices. It was quite convenient. And quite profitable.

There’s something else. The Jewish pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem, with their foreign money.

That money had to be exchanged for local currency. Just like today, when you travel to another country. You have to exchange your money. And just like today, the money exchangers charged a commission. So the merchants also profited in that way.

But think of what the Lord intended the Temple to be. That building was designated as a holy place. It was the place where God especially made His presence especially known.

And the LORD had said that when he saw those animal sacrifices, He would forgive the people of their sins. And the people, in response, would lift up thanks. The people would offer praise and worship around that Temple building.

But in Jesus’ day, what had the Temple become? [Read vs. 16. The Temple had become a place of merchandising. A public market. A money making place.

400 years earlier the prophet Malachi gave a special prophecy about Jesus. [Read Mal 3:1-3.

Where will he come, according to Malachi? At the temple. How will He come? Malachi says Jesus will be like a “refiner’s fire” and like “strong soap.” That is to say, Jesus would purify the Levites. He would cleanse them. Like a refiner’s fire, Jesus would burn off the sins and impurities in Israel. So Jesus is fulfilling that prophecy. He comes to cleanse and purify the Temple. Malachi asks: Who can endure the

day of Jesus' coming?

2. **So now** we see **Jesus' reaction** to the merchants. It's our second point. Jesus' reaction.

We read in John 2, verse 15, that Jesus made a whip. With that whip he drove out all the merchants selling sheep and other animals. And Jesus overturned the tables covered with money! Wow! Imagine the gold and silver coins, scattered along the ground! Rolling along the pavement. Again—vs. 16: This is supposed to be “my Father's house” says Jesus. That's also something new, at that point: Jesus, calling the God of the Temple, His very own Father!

-In the first part of John chapter 2, we noted Jesus' joy in celebrating a wedding.

He wanted the fun and the festivity to continue. He turned the water into good wine.

But here we see another aspect of Jesus' character. Jesus, who, of course, is showing us **God's** character. That though God is loving, yet, in response to sin and greed, God shows His wrath. He is filled with a holy, righteous anger. / And remember, this is out of the zeal, the jealousy, of a loving husband. God is watching his wife, his people, worshipping other gods.

In Jerusalem, they were worshipping the god of money. And, even worse, they were taking advantage of those who have come to worship. Jesus shows righteous jealousy. Godly zeal.

But please note something very important. Jesus' anger isn't directed towards the poor, or the ignorant, or those sincerely coming to worship. To those kind of people, Jesus almost always shows compassion and kindness. But, Jesus' anger is directed especially against those who should know better: the religious leaders. The Jewish priests and Levites.

Appl: Brothers and sisters, this helps us in our ministry today. Following Jesus' example in this regard. We must talk to our family members, friends, acquaintances, who don't know Jesus. We want to give testimony about Jesus. To people who are seeking, who are asking questions, we must be very compassionate and gentle.

But sometimes we meet those who should know better. Maybe for years they had studied the Scripture. They know the truth about Jesus. But they have become rebellious. They have abandoned their first love. At some point, we must remind them of God's righteous judgment. Of Jesus' righteous judgment.

-And for ourselves, also. How often doesn't Jesus rebuke us, because of our sin and rebellion?

How often doesn't he, in love, even discipline us, overturning our tables? Scattering what we have come to wrongly value. Sometimes, out of his zeal, his jealous love, Jesus will turn everything upside down in our lives. If we are living in rebellion against Him.

Here's another aspect to Jesus' zeal, on that day: You see, the religious leaders who should have been leading people to the Lord, are now standing in the way. Instead of leaders

being an entry for people seeking God, they have become a barrier. They become more concerned about making money, than about saving seekers. How awful!!!

-There's another reaction from Jesus...immediately after this event. John tells us in vs 17, that those leaders start to demand of Jesus a special sign. That He would perform some mighty miracle. To prove to them, that he, Jesus, really is the Messiah, the Son of God.

In response to their demands, Jesus refers to the breaking down, or the wearing down, of “the Temple.” Literally, in the Greek, the word is used not only for a Temple, but is more general: it can mean “a holy place” or “a holy thing.” And John tells us that Jesus is referring to his own body, as the holy thing. Like unto a temple.

“Destroy this holy temple,” says Jesus, referring to his body, “and I will raise it up again in three days.” But the Jewish leaders are thinking about that Temple building.

They wonder how could Jesus rebuild a destroyed Temple in just 3 short days.

It had taken King Herod 46 years to build it. How could Jesus rebuild it in just 3 days?

John tells us that the disciples understood, much later. Not at that point, when Jesus first spoke those words—but later, when Jesus rose up from the dead. And when they later received the fullness of the Spirit. Then they understood. Jesus most spectacular sign was him coming to life again,

after he was killed on that cross.

But, when the resurrection miracle took place, how did the Jewish leaders respond?

Did that sign finally bring them to faith in Jesus as their Messiah? No. They rejected the sign. And they rejected Jesus. So to the leaders, Jesus gives no signs, no miracles.

But in vs. 23, we read that to the ordinary Jews, Jesus *did perform* more signs. That's very interesting. That to the ordinary Jews, Jesus did perform more miracles. During that special Passover week. It's teaching us this: Jesus wants ordinary people to learn about Him. Jesus wants seeking people, to come to faith in Him.

-If you haven't... won't you? + Especially when you get to the end of John gospel record. To chapter 20. Read it later, chapter 20. And John writes, there, chapter 20:31—that he wrote down these things, that we might believe that Jesus is the Messiah. That He is the Son of God. And that we would come to faith in Him. If you....

Jesus is the true Temple, the One by whom we come to God the Father.

The One through whom we pray, and worship. The One for whom we live.

3. One closing application. [Read vs. 23 to vs. 24. In the original language, there's a play on words in these verses. Literally, John is writing the some people in that day "trusted" in Jesus (vs. 23). Then vs. 24, but Jesus did not "entrust" himself to any man. It's the same verb in the original Greek language. People *trusted* in Jesus...but Jesus was not *trusting in them*.

There are layers of meaning to this phrase. And various interpretations. But at least this much is clear. John says it clearly: [read vs. 25. Jesus "*knew what was in human hearts.*" Therefore he did not entrust himself to human beings. Especially in that early stage of Jesus revealing himself. At the end of his life, the crowds that used to be cheering for Jesus, they were the ones shouting for his death. Even Jesus' disciples, the Twelve Men, at times, were unsure. Their faith was weak.

Sometimes they disbelieved. *Jesus knew what was in them*, in their hearts, their minds.

They were not steady; they were not steadfast. They often were weak.

Here's the point, for us: If the twelve disciples were often weak in their faith, and in their living, how much more aren't we, today? One of the familiar hymns we sing puts it this way: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. I'm prone to leave the God I love." We all have that tendency to stray from God, to wander from Jesus.

So, Jesus knows that He cannot entrust himself to human hearts. Because He knows what is inside us, deep inside of us.

And in one respect, that is a fearful thing, isn't it? That Jesus sees and knows exactly what is in us? That even now, from heaven, Jesus sees our continuing sin, our faults, our failures? How afraid that should make us... + Boys and girls? Dads and moms?

-We sometimes are even like those religious leaders in Jesus day. Those greedy priests, and merchandising Levites. We are sometimes more concerned about making money, than about bringing genuine worship to Jesus. We become so focused on our jobs, our homes, our cars. And we ignore the people who might be coming to the Temple so to speak. People who on some level are seeking the true God. And sometimes, sadly, we stand in their way.

Like the Jewish rabbis, we can do our Bible study. We can memorize our catechism.

But somehow, we can miss Jesus.

Jesus knows what is found also in our hearts. In the heart of every pastor, every elder, every church member. In ourselves there truly is no spiritually good thing.

But then, brothers and sisters, consider this. That Jesus, today, from his throne in heaven, also sees what He has been doing in our hearts. He sees the work of the Father, in us. And the work of His powerful Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul speaks of God as He "who has begun a good work within us." Jesus work in us. Jesus righteousness credited to us.

It's true: Jesus cannot entrust himself to us, to our weakness of faith, to our imperfect living. But, we can, and we must, entrust ourselves to Him.

Our only hope is to hold on to Jesus. Jesus only is our Temple. In Him, by Him, through Him, are we saved. **LET US PRAY.**

POSTSCRIPT: “JESUS CLEARING THE TEMPLE: ONCE OR TWICE?” By Pastor Rand

Lankheet

As you may know, each of the four gospels each have an account of Jesus “clearing” or “cleansing” the Temple in Jerusalem. The first three gospels (the “Synoptics”) say that this took place in the final week of Jesus life. Each of them records this clearing of the Temple immediately following Jesus’ Triumphal Entry. In John’s account, however, the account of Jesus clearing the Temple occurs in the first weeks of his public ministry (2:12-17). The timing of this event, according to John, is completely different than the other three gospels. What is going on?

To be sure, sometimes gospel writers rearrange the chronology of certain events to better fit the flow of the narrative, or to make a special point. But rarely is there such a radical difference in the recorded timing of such an important event. Thus, many (most?) Bible scholars are of the opinion that there were actually two different clearings of the Temple: the one recorded by John occurring at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, and the other one during the final week of his life on earth. I would agree with this opinion.

In his highly regarded commentary on the gospel of John, Professor Leon Morris gives some of the main reasons for regarding these as two different events. Let me summarize the main reasons he gives, using my own numbering:

1. Comparing John’s account to that of Mark (Mark 11:15-17), John uses many different words. He has different words for the sheep and cattle, the whip made by Jesus, the word for “money changers,” and the word for “overthrowing” the tables. If the same event is being retold, it is surprising how few of the words are used in common. The different vocabulary suggests two separate events.
2. The Synoptics tell us that when Jesus cleared the Temple he quoted from the Old Testament at least twice, from Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7. But John does not record Jesus citing any Scripture. However, John adds that the disciples remembered the words from Psalm 69, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” This reference is missing from the Synoptics’ account. This, again, leads us to believe these are two different events.
3. The practice of selling animals and exchanging money in the Temple courtyards probably was a long established practice. It also probably was very profitable. Jesus’ early clearing of the Temple, evidently, was not sufficient to stop this long-established practice. It is reasonable to assume that Jesus had to clear the Temple a second time, three years later.
4. In Jesus’ trial before Pilate, he was accused of “destroying this Temple and rebuilding it in three days.” But the witnesses disagreed about what Jesus actually said (Mark 14:56-69). If Jesus had spoken those words only five days earlier (during the time of the later clearing of the Temple), it would be unlikely that there would be disagreement about what he said. However, if Jesus spoke those words a full three years earlier, it is very likely that witnesses would disagree about what they remembered.
5. No other event in the first five chapters of John’s account is found in the other three gospels. It is consistent, therefore, to assume that this early cleaning of the Temple also is not found in the other gospels. John is not content to merely repeat what is found in the Synoptics.
6. Some scholars have said that “John is more interested in the truth than in the facts.” However,

throughout his gospel account John says that he is a “witness” and is “testifying” accurately about Jesus. Would John be considered a reliable “witness” if he changed the chronology on the events in Jesus’ ministry so drastically? Probably not. This, also, makes us believe that there are, indeed, two separate clearings of the Temple, one that occurs at the very start of Jesus’ public ministry, and one that occurs near the end of it.