

This summer, I have been preaching through a sermon series that I have entitled “Meeting Jesus,” where I am looking through the gospel of John at the interactions of various people with Jesus, in order to discover who Jesus is and what it means to know and follow Him. This Sunday, we will be in John 2, looking at a very unique and shocking interaction between Jesus and a group of moneychangers.

**John 2:13-22** - *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup> So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup> Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." <sup>20</sup> The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record a second time, later in Jesus’ ministry, when he drives the moneychangers out of the temple:

**Matthew 21:12-13** - *Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. <sup>13</sup> "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"*

Evidently, something was taking place in the temple courts that caused a righteous anger to rise up in Jesus and led him to make a whip out of cords and to drive the money changers out of the temple. He says “How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!” and in Matthew, “It is written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’” What made Jesus so angry? I think the answer is found in the words Jesus speaks. When we look at what he tells the money changers, I think we come to understand what made Him so angry, and I believe it will be very instructive to us today.

### 1) “My Father’s house”

In John 2, Jesus refers to the temple as “My Father’s house,” and in Matthew 21, he quotes a passage from Isaiah 56 where God refers to the temple and says “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” And right there is our first clue about why Jesus becomes so angry. What is this house to which Jesus refers?

In Jesus’ day, there was one temple in Jerusalem where people from all over would gather for worship, especially on the festivals like Passover, the date on which John 2 takes place. The temple was the place people could go to be near the Spirit of God, to hear the truth of God, to seek after God. Even though God is omnipresent and can not be contained by a building, He had told King Solomon back when he built the temple that in this place, He would meet with them in a special way.

So in John 2, it’s Passover, and people from all over have come to Jerusalem for the festival and to the temple to worship. In case you’re unfamiliar, Passover was the holiday commemorating the exodus from Egypt. Everyone who came to the temple for Passover had to offer an animal sacrifice, and of course most foreigners wouldn’t bring a sheep or dove from afar, so they had to exchange their money for local currency and then buy an animal for sacrifice. Hence, the presence of the money changers and animals. But the money changers’ presence in the temple courts, and the manner in which they were conducting their business, was a clear affront to God and to His house. For this was not just the temple they were working in, according to Jesus; this was God’s house.

**Think about the last time someone visited your house.** Or maybe the last time that you were invited over to someone else’s house for dinner. What expectations might you have on someone visiting your house? Or what expectations might you have on yourself as you visit someone else’s house? I can think of a few. Be respectful to the host. Follow the rules of the house. Leave the place better than you found it. And for all of us who have had rude houseguests, you know how offensive it can be when they dismiss the rules and expectations of your house.

One of the reasons Jesus was so angry is because the temple did not belong to the people, the religious leaders, and definitely not to the moneychangers. The temple was where God had told His people that He would dwell in their midst, where they could seek Him and worship and experience the empowering and purifying presence of God. And the money changers were treating Him with disrespect by not following the rules of the house. Instead of helping all who came to meet with God, the money changers were robbing those who visited by overcharging them.

Fast forward to today. After Jesus' death and resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, God does not dwell in the holy of holies in a temple. We do not have to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to meet with Him. God dwells in believers by His Holy Spirit. But He also dwells in our midst in a special way when the church gathers.

***1 Peter 2:4-5** - As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a **spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering **spiritual** sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

***Ephesians 2:19-22** - Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which **God lives by his Spirit**.*

If those passages are true, then the building you are in is not primarily a church building. This is not first and foremost NewLife. **When we gather together for worship, this is God's house, a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.** And so, I think it is worth asking, how do you suppose you are to enter and conduct yourself in God's house?

There are many things I could say, but I think this passage captures the heart of it:

***John 4:23-24** - Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

He is looking for worshipers, those who come to enjoy His presence and give Him the honor He deserves. Treat Him as He is – worship Him in truth. How rude would it be for someone to enter your house and not understand who you are and treat you as if you are someone else. And connect with Him with your whole heart – worship Him in spirit. He is after your heart. He wants those who have come to worship, to meet with Him.

How you dress – only important in how it reflects upon your heart

Show up on time – Brooklyn Tabernacle, people showing up an hour early to the prayer meeting

Taking notes – communicates your expectation that you will hear from God and that you want to remember what He has said

Not going through the motions.

This is God's house. We are here to worship Him, to draw near to Him

**I know because of COVID many have begun to worship at home.** For some, this is a necessity because of health or distance. For others, it has become a habit of convenience. Yes, God can meet us anywhere, but it is not the same at home. It is different coming into God's house vs. bringing God into your house. I love the convenience, but if you can, come into His house and worship with His people.

## 2) "Shall be called a house of prayer"

God's house is first and foremost to be a house of prayer. So why was Jesus so angry? Jesus was upset because the noise of the animals and moneychangers had turned the outer court of the Gentiles into a noisy marketplace. How could anyone meet with God in such an environment?

Above all, His house is to be a house of prayer. More than a house of singing, or a time of fellowship, or even a time of preaching. It's a house of prayer. What is prayer?

Prayer is not just talking to God. That makes God one big ear, and prayer a one-way thing where we tell God what he needs to know in order to run the universe.

I like the way Alvin Reid put it: *Prayer is intimacy with God that leads to the fulfillment of His purposes.*

Primarily about drawing into relationship with God, knowing Him and being known by Him. It contains various elements. Think of the different methods out there: ACTS – Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. PRAY – praise, respond, ask, yield. Reverence, response, requests, readiness. What do they all have in common? Seek His face before His hand. Seek to know Him and align yourself with His will before you go asking for things. The heart of prayer is the fulfillment of His purposes, that our will would align with His, that our character would reflect Him. May YOUR kingdom come, may YOUR will be done. Prayer

is not about bending God's will to ours through some magic formulas. It is primarily about His purposes, and aligning our will with His.

“My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Yes, we preach, but the goal of preaching is intimacy that leads to the fulfillment of His purposes. Yes, we sing, but the goal of singing is intimacy with God that leads to the fulfillment of His purposes.

We may no longer worship at the temple, but God's house is primarily to be known as a house of prayer, a place of intimacy with God that leads to the fulfillment of His purposes.

So how are we doing? **This is where I get a big fat F as the pastor of this church for my lack of prayer.** I have been repenting of my self-reliance. And we need to do the same. After all, the reality is that we can do nothing of eternal significance unless we are aligned with His will:

**John 5:17-19** - *Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." <sup>18</sup> For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. <sup>19</sup> Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son **can do nothing** by himself; he **can do** only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*

Now that is alignment with God's will.

**John 15:4-5** - *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you **can do nothing**.*

If this is true, why do we live as if we can do things on our own? We need an intimacy with God that leads to the fulfillment of His purposes in our lives and in this world. God's will is that everything would be bathed in prayer

Pre-service prayer

After-service prayer

Find ways of leading you into responsive prayer

God's will is that we would seek His face, for He is worthy to be sought. That He would reveal His will to us, so that we might operate not in our power and

ingenuity but in the power of His Holy Spirit as we carry out His will. Our life and ministry have to flow out of our devotion to Him and our intimacy with Him.

Do you come eager to meet with Him, anticipating what He will say or do? God is looking for men and women who honor Him and who want to know Him and carry out His will.

We do not want it to be said of our lives, “You have not because you ask not.”

***James 4:2-3** - You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

Let this church be a house of prayer.

### 3) “for all nations”

Why was Jesus so angry? Not just that they were disrespecting God’s house and using the outer court to sell animals and exchange money rather than for prayer (and likely charging exorbitant fees). He was especially angry because the **outer court was the court of the Gentiles**, where foreigners could come and hear and seek after God. This aspect of the Temple and Judaism was very important:

***Isaiah 56:6-7** - And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant-- <sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

God’s heart is that all who are far from Him would seek and find Him:

***Luke 5:29-32** - Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. <sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" <sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, "It is not the **healthy** who need a **doctor**, but the sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

But what Jesus sees when he comes to the Temple infuriates him: the money changers and those selling animals had set up in the court of the Gentiles, preventing those who had come to seek God from hearing about Him or drawing near to Him.

You want to see God upset? Prevent people from coming to Him.

**Matthew 23:13** – *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”*

You want to see God start overturning tables in your church? Make the gay couple that visits your church feel unwelcome. Treat someone differently because of their political views. Don't sit near the person with mental illness. Turn up your nose at the businessman, or the beggar who walks through your doors. All are welcome in God's house. And if the church shuts its doors in anyone's face, don't be surprised if God starts overturning tables.

God's house is to be a house of prayer for all nations. This place is to be marked by prayer, by a people who are seeking an intimacy with God that will lead to the fulfillment of His purposes. And how is it that sinful people like us can come into the presence of a holy God? Because of Jesus, the true temple where God dwells fully.

**Colossians 2:9** - *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,*

Remember the last part of the passage we read this morning:

*Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." <sup>20</sup> The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

By His death and resurrection, a way has been made for all to come in. All are welcome to God's house. This is the house of prayer for all people, where everyone can come and meet with God, where all who seek Him will find Him.