

John 2:13-22. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 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. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 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.

Dear Christian Friends:

A professional sports team has a terrible season. So, after the last game, the ownership fires the coaches and underperforming players. In the press conference the owner says, "We cleaned house."

That's what Jesus did at the beginning of his ministry. He cleaned house at his Father's temple. And Jesus had every right to do that. As the Son of God and true God himself, he was the owner of the temple in Jerusalem.

That temple needed cleansing because the Jews had polluted it with their corruption. Now, it was not sinful to sell animals at the temple. The faithful Jewish pilgrims needed those animals to make the proper sacrifices. But the temple authorities had a monopoly that scammed those Jewish pilgrims with exorbitant rates for those animals. So, the temple authorities had turned the worship of the Lord into a money-making machine for themselves.

But that greed was only a symptom of deeper disease. The Jewish leaders were only giving lip service to God. In effect, they had kicked God out of the temple and set themselves up in place of God. They had changed the true worship of God into an impossible set of human rules. The result was a false religion based on human ideas. That could only result in damnation for all who followed it.

That's why Jesus **made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area...he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”**

So, Jesus cleaned house at the temple. Jesus also needs to clean house at the temple that goes by the name of Saint John's Lutheran Church of Oakwood, Wisconsin. Now, of course, we don't have money changers in the narthex. Yes, we just began an ambitious fund-raising program. But, we don't go around telling people, "If you want to get right with God; if you want your sins forgiven; if you want to go to heaven, then you have to pay this church fifty thousand dollars."

No, we are not so blatantly greedy as the money changers in the temple, But, we still suffer from the same basic corruption. It's the corruption that kicks God out of his own house. It's the corruption that says, "Hey, this is **MY** church. I show up on a regular basis. I give my offerings. I do some volunteer work. So, I have privileges. If I have a few special sins I would like to keep to myself, then the preacher had better not make an issue about them. And if some teaching of God's Word does not mesh with my opinions, well then, **MY** church will agree with **MY** ideas." Yes, in every single one of us, from the oldest member to the newest member, from the pastor to the shut ins, every one of us has that greedy little money-changer inside. We all tend to think that God's house is really **MY** house.

So, Jesus needs to clean house. Now, Jesus does not come storming down the center aisle, whirling a cat-o-nine-tails. Jesus has a much more powerful whip. It's the Word of God. The book of Hebrews says, **the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit...it judges the thoughts and attitudes of**

the heart. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

So, there is no hiding any sin from God. And it's good that you can't hide sin from God. Trying to hide your sin is like hiding dirt by sweeping it under the rug. Now, nobody likes to see dirt, dust, and slimy gunk in their home. But sweeping dirt under the rug is no solution. That's because if you don't see the dirt and the grime, the unseen germs and bacteria can cause diseases and illness. So, it's a good thing to see the dirt and the gunk. Seeing the dirt prompts you to clean the dirt. That's why we want the whip of God's word to clean our spiritual house. We don't want any sinful bacteria growing underneath our spiritual carpets and infecting our souls with the deadly diseases of selfishness, greed, and pride.

Now, when it comes to your house, wouldn't it be great if you had a free cleaning service? Wouldn't it be great if every day someone else scrubbed, washed, disinfected, cleaned, tidied up, and organized everything in your house from top to bottom?

Well, when it comes to your physical house, no such luck. However, when it comes to your spiritual house--when it comes to your soul, Jesus provides the best cleaning service. Jesus purifies the temple that is your life, your body, and your soul. Jesus cleanses you from the pollution, grime, and filth of sin. Jesus makes your whole life pure and holy.

And our text shows us how Jesus has the power to do that. **Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”** The Jews replied, **“It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”** But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 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.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, the Jewish authorities got angry. They demanded that Jesus prove this authority to do it. But Jesus did not show his

badge from the federal bureau of temple purification. Instead, Jesus pointed to his real authority. He pointed ahead to his death and his resurrection.

The authority that gave Jesus the right to cleanse the temple also gives Christ the power and the authority to purify you from all your sins. It's the authority Jesus has because his body is the temple where God truly lives. Saint Paul says in Philippians, **For in Christ all the fullness of the deity (that is, God) lives in bodily form.** So, when Christ died on the cross, it was the only payment powerful enough to take away the sin of the whole world. And when Christ's body was rebuilt--that is, when Christ's body rose from the grave, it had the power to give life and salvation to all who believe in him.

That's eventually what Christ's disciples realized. Our text says, **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.** That's what God also wants you to do. **BELIEVE IN THE REBUILT TEMPLE.** In other words, believe in Jesus whose body was destroyed on the cross but whose body was rebuilt in the resurrection.

Saint Paul tell us what blessing this faith in Christ brings. Paul says in **Corinthians, you are God's temple and... God's Spirit lives in you...God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.** Yes, believing in Christ makes you a holy temple where God lives by his Spirit. By faith in Christ the Holy Spirit has made you a temple more glorious than the temple in Jerusalem ever was. That's because the Roman army destroyed the Jewish temple forty years after the events of our text. All that's left of that temple is part of a foundation wall. That temple has never been rebuilt.

But after the Roman centurions destroyed God's real temple by nailing it to the cross, God rebuilt it three days later. By believing in the rebuilt temple of Christ, you share in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. That means the Holy Spirit has purified you of all your sins by faith in Christ. God lives in you by faith in Christ. By that same faith God will bless your death just as he blessed and honored the death of Christ. And by that same faith in Christ God will raise your body to be like Christ's perfectly glorified body. Then, with Christ, you will live in God's heavenly temple forever and ever. May God grant this to us all for Jesus' sake! AMEN.