

**John 2:13-22**

**Lent 3; March 11 & 12, 2012**

### **“Let Jesus Clean Your House”**

It's getting to be that time of year again – Spring cleaning. How many people here like to HAVE a clean house? I would imagine that pretty many of you would. But how many of you LIKE TO clean your house? I would imagine that number to be smaller. Why? Cleaning requires work – sometimes lots of work.

This morning, we see Jesus cleaning his house. As you look at the Gospel accounts, we often see Jesus as a patient man. Even though Jesus, as the Son of God, had every reason to be upset at sin and sinful human beings, we don't see it coming through too many times. So on those few occasions when Jesus' displeasure is on display, we sit up and take notice, because we know something must be seriously wrong. Therefore, let us take a look at our text this morning under the theme: **“Let Jesus Clean Your House!”** *1. He cleansed his house with a whip; 2. He cleansed our house with a cross.*

**“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”** The Passover was the feast that commemorated God's deliverance of his people from Egypt. It was the greatest festival of the Jews in a year. When they would go up to Jerusalem, they would come from all over in groups. These pilgrim groups would walk together singing Psalms. You could feel the excitement in the air; hearts were beating. The city was jammed almost with the feeling of being at State Fair. Camels baying off in the distance. Pilgrims saying their prayers. Roman chariots going back and forth watching over the crowds. But most important, this was a time to worship God. It was like Christmas, Easter and the Fourth of July all rolled into one big celebration. It was a time to worship in splendor.

As Jesus approached the temple, **“he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.”** It just made sense to sell the animals that would be sacrificed by the temple. People were traveling from all over the world to celebrate the Passover. They couldn't drag their animals that far. Animals needed to be available for those coming from some distance. Their quality would have to be checked by a qualified inspector. Change had to be made for residents for the temple tax. These services were usually provided in the outlying country some two months in advance to the feast, and then also provided at the temple about two weeks before the celebration. Providing these services weren't wrong in and of themselves.

Yet, things had gone too far. As Jesus is beginning his ministry, he walks into the temple and all he sees is filth. They had brought the animals too far into the temple. It was impossible for anyone to come there and think about having a spiritual relationship with God. He saw abuses and exploitation. He saw people gouging one another. He saw people cheating people in the exchange rate. They were greedy. They were taking advantage of the situation as much as they could. This kind of abuse was not what God intended his temple to be. This was not God's business, but man's.

This uncleanness of the temple that Jesus saw was also an image of the ugliness that was in people's hearts. The temple was being defiled by the hearts and attitudes of the people. The spiritual relationship with God which the sacrifices were intended to display meant nothing to them. Their hearts were also filthy and dirty. They needed to be cleansed by Jesus.

That is why Jesus acted the way he did. **“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!”** No one introduced Jesus. Very few people even knew who he was. He was just beginning his ministry. He made a whip of cords. With his whip, he began to cleanse the temple of the filth that had accumulated there from animals and people alike. He overturned tables and scattered money. He forced cages for birds into their sellers' hands and drove them out.

It must have been so bad that there is no record of anyone objecting to Jesus' anger. They knew God's house needed to be cleaned. Could it be that he had pricked the consciences of hardened and perhaps dishonest businessmen? Was it that the whole episode took place so fast with so little warning? Yet, this is God's house and this was God's Son speaking. God would not tolerate this kind of abuse that was going on in HIS house. People were desecrating his Father's house.

Even though the Jewish leaders weren't objecting to Jesus' cleaning of the temple, they wanted to know by what authority Jesus could do this. **“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.”** Jesus

answered their question. Jesus tells them: *“Go ahead and destroy this temple if that’s what you’re determined to do.”* Jesus was playing on words. He wasn’t talking about brick and mortar. He was talking about his body which would be raised up in three days. He was referring to his death and resurrection. The crowds didn’t comprehend what Jesus was saying. They didn’t realize that at that moment Jesus was talking about God being his Father, that this was his house, and that the Lord God would raise him on the third day. God would pull off the greatest miracle of all and raise him from the dead on Easter.

What does this all mean for us? The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: **“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?”** (1 Cor. 3:16) If we are God’s temple, then what kind of stuff do we see in that temple? All that sin that we commit is in there. All those thoughts that are not God-pleasing. All those words that come flowing out of that temple through our mouths. All of it needs to be cleaned out.

That is what Lent is about it, isn’t it? It about cleaning our spiritual houses. So, how do we do that? We can’t. But God can. He does it through the Gospel. He does it through the cross. He comes with the message of repentance. He comes to us and assures us of complete forgiveness that he won on the cross. He sacrifice himself as our substitute. He scrubbed our hearts clean with his blood. With the waters of baptism he washed our sins away. With his Word he strengthens us in our faith. With the cross before our eyes, he will lead us from this world to his side in heaven. **“Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”** Trust those promises of Jesus. Let Jesus clean your house with a cross. Amen.