

John's Gospel, Jesus is the Son of God:
VI. "The Cleansing of the Temple"
John 2:12–25

Introduction:

This morning we reengage in our journey through the Gospel of John. It's important that we understand something: **The goal of this series of messages is to have us immerse ourselves in the Life, Teaching, and Work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** I am convinced that if we can see who Jesus is and what He came to do, we will be able to make good, well-informed decisions about what to do with Jesus' claims to be the Son of God who alone can introduce us to an experience of saving grace.

John writes in his Gospel account and in his letters about the profound truth that Jesus came to introduce us to **Spiritual Adoption** by God the Father. Knowing the Father God intimately as our "Abba Father" is one of the key themes in everything John writes in the Bible. Let's read together two of the key texts addressing this truth:

John 1:12, 13 *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."*

I John 3:1 *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"*

John's Gospel is a unique when it is compared with the accounts written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the three gospels called the Synoptic Gospels. To begin with, most scholars agree that Mark's Gospel written first, in the early AD 60's, with Luke's being the last written no later than AD 68. The aged Apostle John recorded his Gospel when he was in Ephesus, Turkey between 88 and 95 AD, 20 years after Luke was written. John wrote his account probably having full understanding of what the other witnesses had written.

Let's restate the most obvious differences between what is written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke as it is compared with what John wrote so we can see the method and the message John employed to communicate to his readers.

First, the Setting Where Jesus' Ministry Takes Place. The Synoptic Gospels have the majority of the life and ministry of Jesus taking place outside of Jerusalem and Judea. The stories are, for the most part, set in Galilee in the villages surrounding the Sea of Galilee. John's Gospel is set almost exclusively in and around Jerusalem, with the exception of five short one-week-long divergences into Galilee and across the Jordan River. The Synoptic writers talk about the one and one half years in Galilee, while John writes a lot about Jesus' first days and last week!

The Duration of Jesus' Ministry. The Synoptic Gospels have a record of about one and one half years of Jesus' ministry life. Matthew, Mark, and Luke only write about one Passover, the one at which Jesus was crucified. But in the Gospel of John Jesus' ministry life transpires over the course of three Passover feasts, meaning that Jesus' ministry was at least two and one half years long. **John tells the story of Jesus' first temple cleansing happening during the first Passover feast in His ministry years. The Synoptic writers have the second cleansing of the temple happening at His last Passover feast in His third ministry year!**

The Message of the Miracles Jesus Performed. The Synoptic Gospels record Jesus' His miracles indirectly point in the direction of His unique spiritual life. You have to almost read in to the texts that the miracles Jesus did point us to His divine origins because Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not state it.

The Gospel of John records Jesus' miracles and then interprets **those miracles as "Signs" revealing who Jesus was: His Character and His Nature.** The signs point to **His uniqueness as God's Son, who is the way and the truth and the life come from the heart of God, and who alone has divine authority over sin, disease, and life and death.**

What really grabs our attention is **what John says about Why he wrote his Gospel Message.** He wanted people everywhere, both Jewish people and Greek people to have the opportunity to examine the story of the life, the message, and the work of Jesus Christ, the unique, One and Only Son of God.

Let's read together aloud John's reason for writing down this Gospel message. It is found in John 20:30, 31: **"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**

Today we take a second look at what John wrote in John 2. Last week when we were together we studied the text about Jesus turning water into wine. We saw in that text that Jesus was trying to help people to see a profound truth. In Him that is in His **Person** and **Work** that He came to do for us there is established for us an entirely new way of relating to God, worshiping Him, and engaging with Him in love and service. **Jesus confronted the "religious order" of His day, the role of the priests and the sacrificial system, thus giving us a new definition of what it means to be religious.**

Often in the Church of Jesus here in North America if you listen carefully to what is being said by what are called "Emerging Church Leaders" or churches that focus on being "relevant" to culture, the word "religion" is given extremely negative connotations. I get it that the modern preacher is attempting to distinguish between outwardly religious activities and loving and serving Jesus from the heart.

My concern is that people who are "religious" or "church people" are all equally labeled as displeasing to God and to be avoided. But the truth is James tells us there are wonderful connotations to the word religion. James writes in James 1:26, 27 ***"If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is***

worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

In seeking to honor what Jesus came to do in human hearts it is important to stay focused on what Jesus did as He confronted the religious systems of His day that were extremely corrupt. If we can keep that focus, we won't place a humanly judged label on good, sincere people putting something on them Jesus never intended as a label for them to wear. So let's study what Jesus came to confront and what Jesus came to establish and bless.

I. The First Cleansing of the Temple Courts:

John 2:13 – 16 “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!’”

There are a number of things that are involved in this picture John paints of Jesus clearing the temple courts. Jesus is visibly upset by what He found in the outer courts of the temple area and it is helpful to know exactly why He was upset. **The presence of money changers and people selling sheep, cattle, and doves represents a very corrupt religious establishment, a money-making organization that existed in Jerusalem at the time under the oversight of the High Priest.**

1. The first insight to share here is that **every Jewish person above the age of 19 was responsible to pay the temple tax.** It represented **the amount of approximately two days of an average person’s income.** All of the adults who lived in the area and those who were on pilgrimage from another area of the world were responsible to pay the temple tax. However, in order to qualify for payment the tax, the worshiper couldn't use street coins. He or she had make their payment in either Judean or Temple coins.

So in order to change money from some other place, country, or even Israel at the time, the High Priest created the money exchange system, which according to the Talmud permitted the money changers to make a small fee so they could live. But what was done at the temple fired Jesus up. The temple tax was already two day's wages, which was hard on poorer Jewish people, but then **the High Priest had tacked on an exchange rate of 50% to go from street coins to temple coins! Instead of it costing the worshipers two day's wage, it cost them three day's wages.**

2. The second insight has to do with **the actual sacrifices that were made in order to cleanse the worshipers so they were ready to engage in the Passover feast.** There were probably a minimum of 2 million people who were there for the week leading up to the Passover feast. Jewish people and converts to Judaism traveled in on pilgrimage from all over the Roman Empire and found places to stay within a 15 mile radius of Jerusalem.

The worshipers came early to the week of the Passover feast so they could **Engage in Worship** rites, **Repent** of their **Sins**, and **Offer Sacrifices so they would be ready to eat the Passover Lamb with hearts attuned to the will and the ways of God**. They desired to be cleansed of sin, to be repentant, and made ready to fellowship with God and God's people as they celebrated and thanked God for their deliverance from bondage to Egypt and their birth as a nation. This was an enormously big event in the lives of the first-century Jewish people!

Many of them brought animals to the temple to sacrifice. But in order for them to be offered they had to pass the inspection of men designated by the High Priest as qualified to pass judgment on whether or not the animal was perfect. If it was deemed imperfect, and almost all of them were, the animal had to be sold on the street and a perfect animal had to be bought at the temple. All of the animals at the temple were perfect, acceptable for sacrifice, and the worshipers had to pay an extremely high price for perfection! **It was systemic fleecing of poorer people in the name of acceptable worship rites and it broke Jesus' compassionate heart for the poor people!**

That Jesus singled out the dove sellers is because they were supposed to be serving the poorer people at the time, to enable poorer people to offer acceptable sacrifices that cleansed them of sin too. The pair of doves clause in the Old Covenant Law was written for poor people. These men sold a pair of doves, valued at 6 dollars on the street for 95 dollars in the temple. It was absolute religious extortion!

So much money was flowing into the temple financial coffers through these fundraising schemes that they took in about 75,000 per day! When a man named Crassus captured and sacked Jerusalem in 54 BC he went in and ransacked the temple. When he left he took what today would amount to 4 million US dollars and hardly made a dent in what was there in the temple treasury at the time!

3. The third insight is where the religious Extortion of Funds from the worshipers was taking place. In the temple built by Herod the Great between 20 BC and AD 64, there were a total of five courts or holy places. Moving from the outside in, they increased in holiness the further you moved toward the center of the temple rites, which was The Holy of Holies. The first court was the Court of the Gentiles, the second court was the Court of Women, the third court was the Court of the Priests, next came the Holy Place, and then the Holy of Holies.

There was only one place on earth where Gentiles and women could go and engage with God in prayer and worship, the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of Women respectively. **Those two courts are precisely where the High Priest chose to set up his money-making system of selling sheep, cattle, doves and the tables of the money changers!** What that effectively did was to take away the one opportunity gentiles and women had to show their love for God!

So when a gentile worshiper or a woman went into their courts to worship, to hear the Torah read, or pray and meditate on the Word of God all they could hear was the loud cries of the animal sellers and the clatter of coins and bartering from the tables of the money changers. **Their desire for giving God their heartfelt worship was drowned out by the money-making machine of the High Priest and his followers!**

4. The fourth insight is that there were worship rites going on that were void of reverence for God! In the eyes and the heart of God Worship without Reverence is a Terrible thing!

The truth is that we were made for reverent worship. There is something in all of us that is deeply moved when we sense that God Almighty is near, we sense His presence as we worship. **The men who were responsible for these worship rites had so formalized them and humanized them that the sense of awe at the majesty of God was completely lacking.**

Because Jesus loved God the Father first above all else, He also dearly loved His children. This passionate love for God and His children burning in His heart would not permit him to stand back and permit this to go on unchallenged. He made a whip of cords and drove out the animals. He overturned the tables of the money changers. He pointed them to this being His Father's house as His reason for His actions! **People were being shut out from Experiencing the Presence of God personally and it was more than Jesus could bear!**

II. The New Temple:

John 2:18 – 22 *“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 Scriptures and the words that Jesus had spoken.”*

What Jesus did in the temple is clearly an act that the Messiah was predicted to do. When the leaders saw Jesus clear the temple they thought about all of the false prophets and others who had come and gone proclaiming they were the Messiah. They asked Jesus to do a miraculous sign that would validate His authority to do things that the Messiah would do. Can Jesus give them a sign that will authenticate that He is in fact the Messiah?

Jesus responded with an answer that is hidden from the casual observer. What He said back to them requires some thought for us to be able to understand Him. Earlier in the text when John is referencing the physical temple, the Greek word John used for that temple is “Heiron,” meaning “the sacred enclosure of buildings that are used for the worship of God Almighty.”

What Jesus said to them is really remarkable: “Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days.” The word Jesus used for destroy is the word *lusate* in Greek meaning, “let loose, or untie, or dissolve what holds together this temple,” and **Jesus used the word *naos* in Greek meaning, “the dwelling place of deity,” referring to His own physical body not the temple buildings, and “I will raise it up in three days.”**

After Jesus died and rose again, the disciples remembered this conversation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders at the beginning of His ministry three years earlier at the beginning of the Passover feast. And John adds something here that is powerful to the careful observer. John writes, *“After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. **Then they believed the Scriptures and the words that Jesus had spoken.**”*

Jesus is telling the Jewish religious leaders that something powerful is taking place in His life and ministry. The system of sacrificing animals, the priestly roles, the temple as the dwelling place of God is all changing because Jesus, the Son of God, has come to establish a new temple.

Today the temple, the dwelling place of God Almighty, is the Heart and Mind of every child of God who believes Him and receives Him as Savior and Lord.

III. The Searcher of Human Hearts:

John 2:23 – 25 *“Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in man.”*

In the New Testament there are numerous words that are used for supernatural wonders that astonish and astound, miracles that are displays or acts of power. But **John’s favorite word is the Greek word semeion, translated “Sign.” The word has the connotation of the act pointing the observers of the sign to see and understand something about the one who is performing the sign.**

When John writes about Jesus’ miracles he tells us they are signs. He says they are not simply an astonishing thing that has happened evoking wonder and excitement in the hearts of those who saw what Jesus did. It wasn’t just an act of power: It was a sign, meaning Jesus was pointing the careful observer to see something else. The signs Jesus did pointed people to see something about the one who was performing it:

The miraculous signs revealed something about the **Character of Jesus.**

The miraculous signs laid bare something of **Jesus’ Nature as Son of God.**

The miraculous signs Jesus performed **actually pointed the people to see the nature of God the Father,** whom Jesus intensely desired to honor as He went about **doing His Abba Father’s Will for His life!**

The power Jesus used to heal the sick, to give sight to the ones born blind, to make lame people walk, to feed the hungry, healed and gave comfort the sorrowing. The fact that Jesus used this power in this way was proof to them not just that Jesus cared for them but His Abba Father cared for them and directed Jesus to do these things for them! **In the miracles of Jesus there are three things: The Wonder it creates, the Power it displays, and the Love of God that Motivates it!**

John tells us that Jesus would not entrust Himself to the call of people to step forward as the Savior, the Messiah, for He knew there wasn’t a single person who, as of this point in His public ministry, even remotely understood who He was or what He came to do. **Their human eyes were astonished and their minds were captured by the power, but Jesus would not cash in on a moment’s popularity.** He was after full and complete understanding, hearts that longed to know and love God the Father, hearts that were surrendered to His will!

In short, Jesus was looking for people who chose to see His life of love and sacrifice to do the will of God; that fully surrendered heart, soul, and mind is the path to being used by God the Father to make a difference in the lives of others. **The path of Redemption is the path of Self-Sacrifice.** There is no redemption without embracing the Cross as an instrument of death to selfish thinking and self-interest in our desires. It was true for Jesus. It is equally true for you and me!

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VI. "The Cleansing of the Temple"
John 2:12–25

Introduction:

We are in a series of messages studying the Gospel of John. The goal of this series is to immerse ourselves in the **L**_____, **T**_____, and **W**_____ of Jesus.

John writes that Jesus came to earth to introduce us to **S**_____
A_____ by God the Father, John 1:12–13; I John 3:1.

Let's restate the obvious differences between the Synoptic writers and John:

First, the **S**_____ where Jesus' ministry took place ...

Second, the **D**_____ of Jesus' ministry ...

Third, the **M**_____ of the miracles Jesus performed ... John calls them "signs" pointing us to see Jesus' **C**_____ and **N**_____.

What grabs our attention is what John says about why he wrote His **G**_____
M_____ about the life, teachings, and work of Jesus, John 20:30–31.

We are looking at John 2. Jesus turned water into wine, pointing to a larger truth. In Him, His **P**_____ and **W**_____, Jesus established for us a new way of relating to God the Father.

In the Church today we often hear people in the emerging church use the word "religion" or "church people" in negative ways. But the truth is, James uses the word as something good and positive, James 1:26–27.

In studying Jesus' life and applying what He came to do for us, it is important we make clear what Jesus opposed and why. Let's look at this text together.

I. The First Cleansing of the Temple Courts:

John 2:13–16

The presence of the sellers and money changers represents a corrupt, religious, money-making organization run by the High Priest. Four key insights:

1.) Every Jewish person over 19 years of age had to pay "The Temple Tax," about two days' wages. The tax couldn't be paid with street money.

The money-changers added a fee that essentially made people pay about **T**_____
D_____ **W**_____.

2.) People showed up early to make sacrifices and repent of sin so they were ready to engage in the Lord's P _____ F _____. They had to buy "perfect" temple animals. Jesus singled out those who sold doves!

3.) W _____ the High Priest set up the money-making organization. The one place on earth where Gentiles and women could go to share their heart to W _____, P _____ and H _____ God's Word was drowned out by clamor and clutter!

4.) There was worship going on that had no heart to revere God. Worship without R _____ is a T _____ thing to do!

Jesus loved God and God's people. Because He did, he could not bear that people were shut out from E _____ God's presence!

II. The New Temple:

John 2:18–22

Jesus acted in the temple in ways that the Messiah would act. They demanded a sign to prove who He was.

John talks about the physical temple—the Greek word heiron. Jesus talks about His body the temple—the Greek word naos, "The dwelling place of deity."

John recalls what happened to him and his friends after Jesus died and was raised again, John 2:22.

Jesus came to establish a new temple. It is the H _____ and M _____ of every person who believes in and received Jesus in his or her heart and soul!

III. The Searcher of Human Hearts:

John's favorite word for miracles of Jesus is semeion—S _____. The word means that His miracles point the observer to see things about Him:

- They enable us to see something of His C _____.
- They enable us to see something of His N _____ as Son of God.
- They point people to see God the Father's N _____ of love for us.

The miraculous signs of Jesus point us to see three things: The W _____ they create, the P _____ they display, and the L _____ of God that M _____ them.

The path of R _____ is the path of S _____ -S _____ !

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. Why do you think it is important for us to know and understand the truth John wrote about our spiritual adoption?
2. John refers to Jesus' miracles as signs. As he repeatedly uses that term, what do you think John wants the readers to see and understand?
3. What were your thoughts as you heard about the money-changers' role and the exchange rate charged to worshipers in the temple courts?
4. What were your thoughts as you heard about two million worshipers in Jerusalem preparing their hearts for the Passover and being forced to purchase "perfect" temple animals?
5. In your opinion, what was Jesus so angry about as He viewed what was taking place in the outer courts?
6. As you think about the words, "worship without reverence is a terrible thing," do you agree or disagree? Why?
7. What do you think about Jesus using a different word in the Greek for temple as He spoke about His death and resurrection? What does Jesus want us to know?
8. When you think about what the signs were intended to do, which thought grabs your heart and causes you to think more?
9. Read together aloud Ephesians 2:11–22 and I Corinthians 6:10–22. Discuss insights you have from the texts about all of us being joined together into a spiritual temple in which Jesus lives.
10. What one thing stands out to you from this message? What key life-lessons has the Spirit of Jesus been talking to you about since Sunday?