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3/13/22
John 2:13-25
Sunday AM

Many years ago, when we lived in MS, a house on our street caught fire. What was interesting about the fire was there was never an actual fire – and yet the house got so hot on the inside, the nails in the sheetrock seared thru, and the stainless-steel refrigerator melted.

SEE – for a fire to be a fire, it requires **fuel, heat, and oxygen**. In this fire, a socket shorted in the laundry room where the door was shut. Thus, there was fuel, heat, and just enough oxygen to get the fire started, but not enough to make it combust into flames. So, after the primary oxygen in the room was consumed, the fire continued seething b/c there was just enough air entering from under the door to fuel it, but not make it combust – generating an incredible amount of heat.

I wonder – have you ever been so justifiably angry that you could barely see straight, and all it would've taken was a hint of oxygen and could've exploded? To be honest, I had one of those moments in the past 3 days.

Here's the big question. How did you respond? Did you start seething? Did you blow up? Or were you able to express your frustration in a manner that was intentional/controlled – and still you made your point?

Such was the case in John 2:13-25 when Jesus entered the Temple court to see it turned into a den of thieves.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, He found people 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 courts, both sheep/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! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then responded to Him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in 3-days." They replied, "It has taken 46-years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in 3-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 Jesus had spoken. John 2:13-22

Today, I want to share a message God laid on my heart during my QT last week. A few yrs ago, I was compelled by the H.S. to strap on my sandals to become the 13th disciple to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as He mentored the 12. Along the way, my walk w/ the Lord was so greatly enriched that I've continued now going thru it for the 5th time – and last week, the H.S. stopped me in my tracks here in John 2.

To appreciate this passage, we have to understand the purpose of the Temple in the life of Israel. The Temple was central to Jewish life. It was the place where God's glory/presence resided. It was the holy place where corporate sacrifice and intercession were made; and, it was the place where God's name and truth were to be proclaimed to the nations.

SEE – Inside the Temple walls, there were many areas where only certain people could go and where specific functions took place. The Holy of Holies was where the Ark of the Covenant was housed and where only the High Priest could enter annually to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the Jews. The Holy Place was where the priests would perform regular rituals for the people. The Inner Court was where Jewish men were allowed to pray/worship while the Court of Women was where women were allowed to pray/worship. Finally, there was the Gentile Courts (largest outer court) where the Gentiles were allowed entrance to hear about and worship Jehovah – and is where this event took place.

So, what was taking place when Jesus showed up?

First, we must understand the context. Jesus arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate *Passover*. The Passover was the most important of the Jewish feasts as it celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage – when the Lord killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, but passed over the house of the Israelites who had painted blood from a sacrificed animal over their doorpost.

Quite simply, the Passover is the most essential God event in O.T. – and it served as a picture of God's grace and salvation to His people. Thus, Jewish and Gentile peoples from all over the Roman Empire would've made the trek to Jerusalem and the Temple would've been teeming w/ activity.

Of course, upon His arrival, Jesus couldn't help but be frustrated by what He was witnessing. Instead of finding a holy place of worship, sacrifice, and G.C., God's Temple had been turned into a den of thieves – as the outer Gentile court had been turned into a freak show where the Temple leaders were exploiting and gouging the people for personal gain.

Thus, what was lost was the purpose of the Temple. So, in a controlled, holy rage, Jesus began making His point. And in turning over the tables and scattering the merchants – *Jesus was sending a message calling the people back to God and to the heart of worship.*

What happened? More importantly, what do we need to learn from this event so that it never happens to us?

I **CASUAL** w/ God's Glory

When Jesus arrived, instead of finding the Jews honoring/proclaiming God's name to the nations – they had turned the very place where they were to share His grace into a place where God's name and glory were being disgraced.

Instead of realizing the importance of the Temple as a place of worship, sacrifice, and G.C., the Jews were using the Gentile courts as a place to do business b/c they'd lost sight of the glory of God.

Which raises a question – **What is the glory of God?** God's glory is nearly impossible to define b/c we're trying to describe what's beyond our comprehension as His glory entails everything He is, as well as, everything He can do; has done – and will do.

Yet this is where worship begins – as we stand in awe of His glory for which we can neither explain nor fathom – we're willing to bend our knees, bow our hearts, and submit our lives to honor His person?

I often wonder if we've once again lost the wonder of worship? Are we truly hungry to see His glory? Or are we treating God as less than God by making worship more about us and what we prefer than about Him?

Let me ask you a dangerous question – why do you go to church? What are you hoping to occur when we gather? And why do we choose the churches we choose? For if our worship is more about us than it is about Him, then we've **become** nothing more than consumers seeking entertainment to gratify ourselves.

A church that can't worship must be entertained, and men who can't lead a church to worship must provide entertainment. *A.W. Tozer*

LISTEN – If we're ever to bend our knees/bow our hearts to God, it'll be b/c we begin to see Him for who He is instead of for who we want Him to be – and in turn, we'll choose to be CAREFUL w/ His glory.

II CARELESS w/ God's Holiness

A 2nd reality that occurred is that they had become too careless w/ God's holiness. As a result, they were neither set apart nor did they see worship or the house of God as a special place to seek/glorify God.

This occurred thru-out their history – remember when Uzzah touched the Ark of the Covenant and God stuck Him dead b/c he was too careless w/ God's holiness.

The same is happening among the church today. I'm afraid we've become too careless w/ the things of God. Too many professing Christians neither keep the Sabbath holy nor do they value the fellowship/worship of the body. B/w work, travel sports, vacations, etc., God's people are forsaking the assembly. This isn't to say it's a sin to miss church – yet for too many, it's become a way of life – and God, seemingly, has been pushed to the side for other activities – to the point that church participation is now 1-2x every 6-weeks.

Yet having a church family is vital to our spiritual health/well-being. Sharing life and giving one another encouragement is essential to our pursuit of God and our pursuit of life. Listen to **Hebrews 10:19-25**:

Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us thru the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God w/ a sincere heart and w/ the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed w/ pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:19-25

Let me show you another text that speaks to the magnitude of not becoming careless w/ God's holiness

Therefore, w/ minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do: for it is written: "Be holy, b/c I am holy." 1 Peter 1:13-16

If we become careless w/ God's holiness, we'll likely become friendly w/ sin. And when sin creeps into the camp, we'll begin drifting away from God to a way that seems right to us – and conformed to the world.

III CAVALIER w/ God's Mission

That is, we'll begin to lose sight of the importance of the Gospel and our role in living and sharing the hope of Christ w/ others. We'll see our burden for the lost begin to wane as we become unconcerned/dismissive of the spiritual needs of others?

What is God's mission? In Luke 19:10, Jesus said it was *to seek and to save the lost*. In Philippians 2, Paul said Jesus stepped out of heaven and into flesh to lay down His life to give life. **What does this mean?**

Jesus didn't come to be a great teacher, political figure, or conquering hero – He came to be the sacrificial lamb and Savior of humanity. And His plan was to meet every person at the point of their need to meet their greatest need – forgiveness thru salvation – and then invite them to participate in living and sharing His love/grace to the nations.

What you might not realize is this was the purpose of the Gentile Court in the Temple. As the nations came to Jerusalem, they were allowed access into the Temple where the Jews were expected to share the name of Jehovah w/ everyone. Yet, when Jesus entered that day, it was obvious that they had lost their sense of mission/conviction – and the Jews had no concern for the lostness around them.

The Israelites had lost sight of this purpose.

Instead, they had made life about themselves and their comforts – for this is the nature of man – to satisfy himself. Thus, amid their ambitions, they lost sight of God and His mission.

DMT – the Temple was always to be a place where God’s glory was to be experienced by a people set apart by God to pursue His holiness – so that the nations would desire to know this God. Yet b/c they we’re careless w/ His glory, and casual w/ His holiness – they had become cavalier about His purposes.

This brings me to the punchline of this message – and what the H.S. put His finger on in me.

Where is God’s Temple today? **1 Corinthians 6:19f** says – *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the H.S., who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you’ve been bought at a price. Therefore, honor God w/ your bodies.*

If you’ve received Christ as your personal Lord/Savior – you are the place where God’s presence now abides. The H.S. dwells in you to accomplish God’s work both in and thru you. **You are His Temple** and a part of His royal priesthood. Listen to **1 Peter 2:4-6, 9-10**:

As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to Him. You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering sacrifices acceptable to God thru Christ... You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This means, like the Temple, **our lives are to be a place of worship, sacrifice, and G.C.** And I’m certain this is why Paul wrote to the believers in Rome:

I urge you, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God for this is your true and proper worship. Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing, and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2

Is your life a place of worship, sacrifice, and G.C. or have you become too **CASUAL** w/ the glory of God, too **CARELESS** w/ the holiness of God, and too **CAVALIER** w/ the mission of God?

If so, then what tables does God need to turn over in your life to get your attention? What does He need to do to shake you to wake you? What darkness in you needs to be exposed to His glorious light?

Rest assured – God will never give up trying to get your attention to turn your heart towards Him.

Here’s what I’ve learned in my 43 years of following Jesus. If God has to bless you to get your attention; He will bless you. If He has to break you to get your attention; He will break you – He will do whatever it takes, turning over any and every table to disrupt the moments of your everyday life to turn your heart towards Him – but He’ll never beg, He’ll never barter, and He’ll never bully. And yet, He’ll never, ever stop pursuing a love relationship w/ you.

TAKEAWAYS

Just as the purpose of the Temple was to worship, offer sacrifices, and share God's name to the nations – so too is this our purpose now that the H.S. lives in us.

The great threat to our lives honoring God is that we too become careless w/ the glory of God, casual w/ the holiness of God, and cavalier w/ the mission of God.

God will never stop turning over tables and disrupting our lives in order to turn our hearts to Him.

NEXT STEPS

1 Spend time this week in your quiet time or with another person discussing these GROW questions.

G – Has there been a time in your life when you felt God was turning over the tables to get your attention?

R – Read **Romans 12:1-2** – what does it mean that our spiritual form of worship begins w/ being a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God?

O – Are there any areas in your life where you've become too casual, comfortable, careless, or cavalier?

W – Spend time this week addressing these areas.

2 This week – memorize Romans 12:1-2