



Faith Fits – Jesus

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... today's Bible story takes place in a market where they may have been gouging prices. So, what's the most you've paid for something seemingly insignificant because of where you were? Maybe you ponied up for the \$15 Mickey-dog at Disney World? Ever bought the \$20 picture of you on a roller coaster? Maybe it was a soda at a sporting event? Hey, they gave you a souvenir up... that makes it worth \$12.

OPENING PRAYER

Righteous Father, break our hearts for what breaks yours, and then give us the courage to make a difference.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we wrap up our series on the epic tantrums of the Bible and what we can learn from them. Hopefully, this has been a light-

hearted, yet meaningful series for you, because, no one is exempt from the occasional meltdown. And there's just something relatable and comforting knowing that these pillars of the faith occasionally lost their crap. And they all ended up in the Bible, so maybe there's hope for us, too. We've covered a lot of ground, but one topic has eluded us to this point: is there ever a time when a fit is justified? Today, we'll close the series by looking at a tantrum that may just have been warranted, and how it can help us determine when our anger might be, as well. But first...

Question 1: Last week, we talked about controlling the metaphorical “tigers crouching outside your door,” the things you struggle with that always threaten to bring you to the edge of a meltdown. How did you do with that this week? Were you able to keep the tigers at bay, or did you allow them to get the better of you?

SCRIPTURE

In the first three installments, we covered fits that were mostly unjustifiable. We started with Elijah's tantrum, and how a “nap and a snack” can help us through our fits. We need to take a break from the thing that causes us to get to the point of a meltdown, and make time for something that feeds our soul to give us sustenance for the journey. Then, we looked at Moses's figurative and literal meltdown, destroying the idol the Israelites had made to worship instead of God. This taught us how to prevent some of our tantrums, namely that they are often the result of impatience and seeking idols rather than God. And last week, we looked at one of the first recorded fits, that of

Cain, who, when confronted with jealousy and anger, let it consume him. The moral here was to not let the things we struggle with consume us, but to be humble enough to admit them and then overcome them. But what do we do when we feel like our meltdown is justified? Well, to answer that question, we're going to go straight to the top, and examine a tantrum by the man himself...

Jesus

Yup, even Jesus threw the occasional tantrum. In fact, he got angry numerous times. But there's one fit he threw that trumped them all. It was evidently memorable enough that it was recorded in all 4 versions of Jesus's life in the Bible. And if you'd have witnessed it, it would not have been easily forgotten. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it comes at the end of Jesus's ministry, the week before he would be crucified, and it serves as the last straw for the Pharisees to call for Jesus's death. In the gospel of John, however, it comes closer to the beginning of Jesus's ministry. Let's take a look at that version.

Read John, chapter 2, verses 13 through 17.

In John's recounting of Jesus's life, this is just the *second* thing Jesus does at the *beginning* of his ministry! He turns water into wine, then goes bull-in-a-china-shop on the temple. What a way to start your career. But this is why we're looking at John's gospel... if it comes at the start of Jesus's ministry, then it means something. Jesus is making a statement, setting the tone. So, what is the point Jesus is trying to make? Well, that sometimes a little anger might be justified.

Question 2: Consider this scripture. Does anything stand out to you? If you were a disciple witnessing this event, what would you have thought? What message do you think you'd have walked away with?

REFLECTION

First, we gotta know *why* Jesus gets mad. What about this makes the Messiah make a mess? Well, we have to know a bit about what's going on here in order to understand the tantrum. See, at this time, the Jews were still living under the Books of the Law, and all sorts of sins, both intentional and unintentional, required you to go make a sacrifice at the temple. Depending on the offense, your status, and financial situation, you might be required to sacrifice anything from a pigeon or a dove to a lamb or cow. There were also grain and money offerings, too. (Might be fun to start talking about our sins in terms of the animal we'd have to sacrifice to atone for it. "No biggie, it was only a pigeon-sin." But we digress...) Now, look what it says in verse 13, **"it was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration..."** This was a time when thousands of Jews made pilgrimages to Jerusalem from all over the empire, and you're not always going to be able to bring your cow or lamb or dove with you for sacrifice. So, merchants sold these things so the travelers could make the appropriate sacrifices.

This also brings up another point: why are there moneychangers? Well, with all these travelers, there were lots of different currencies that would come into the market. And, being the Roman Empire, lots

of those currencies had images of Caesar or depictions of pagan or Roman gods on them. But because the Israelites evidently learned their lesson from Moses's tantrum, they wouldn't allow money sacrifices to be made if the coins had a graven image on them. (They didn't have to drink more metal-milkshakes.) There were only a few accepted currencies that didn't have graven images, thus, the need for the money changers. Follow all that? Good. Summary: people needed to buy their sacrificial animals, and they needed to change money to make the proper offerings, ergo... a market. And all those things are good. All those things are just needed for being a good Jew. So, why did the cheese slide off Jesus's cracker? It wasn't about *what* was happening, it was about *where* it was happening. Look at what Jesus says, **"Stop turning my Father's *house* into a marketplace."** (v16) Jesus probably would have been chill if they'd have set up the market *outside* the temple. But because it was happening *in* the temple, he makes a whip and goes all Indiana Jones on their butts.

Question 3: If you were put in this situation, would you have flipped some tables? That is, are you someone likely to interject or intervene when you see something that bothers you? Or do you take a "hands off, not my monkeys, not my circus" approach to situations like this? Do you mind your business or make it your business?

Now, there are three interesting nuances to the point Jesus was trying to make, that can help us understand whether or not *our* anger is justified. First, the most common argument of why Jesus is angry

comes from what Matthew, Mark, and Luke recall Jesus saying. In their versions, Jesus does the same flipping tables bit, (no whip this time,) but then he quotes scripture, saying, **“you’ve turned [the temple] into a *den of thieves*.”** (Mark 11:17 NLT) The suggestion here is that the sellers of these animals and the people changing the money were crooked and gouging prices. They had set up a corrupt system that everyone had just become accustomed to. And so, like paying for a \$12 soda at Busch Stadium, these market vendors may have been taking advantage of people just trying to worship. This gives us the first litmus test for righteous anger: does the thing that set you off have to do with an unjust system? People seemed to be fairly okay with what was going on in the Temple. It’s just the way it had always been... and it took Jesus flipping the script, for people to see the failure of the “way things always have been.” Is your anger brought on by an unjust system, one that doesn’t treat people fairly or equally, one that doesn’t give everyone the same opportunities, one that seems to only benefit those who already have the power? If your fit is brought on by an unjust system, it might just be justified.

Question 4: Is there something that seems to be “the way things have always been” that bothers you? What would you change about it? What can you do to make a difference?

For the Second nuance that can help us understand if our fits are justified, you need to know a bit about how the Temple was set up. The Temple had 4 concentric courts... like a Russian nesting dolls of courtyards. The smallest inner court was only for the priests and was

the holiest part of the temple. Outside that was a slightly larger court where Jewish men could worship and make their sacrifices. Outside that was a larger court where Jewish women could enter. And the largest, main court was called the Court of the Gentiles. Why is there a court for Gentiles, you might ask? Well, Gentiles (non-Jews) *did* worship at the Temple, paying homage to the Jewish God. Seems weird, right? But Romans viewed themselves as incredibly pious people, and being polytheistic, (worshipping many gods,) what's one more? It made sense for them to go worship the "local deity" wherever they found themselves. So, local Romans living in Israel would go to the temple and drop some shekels to stay in Yahweh's good graces.

But here's the thing... The Gentile's Court was where the market was set up. And you can imagine, all that racket with a virtual aviary and petting zoo, plus the clinking of coins and all the talking, the Gentiles probably couldn't do a whole lot of worshipping or praying in their court. Was this why Jesus blew his lid? Maybe. There's evidence for it in Mark's version of this story. Jesus quotes Isaiah, and says, **"The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,'** (Mark 11:17 NLT) That "for all nations" bit... yeah, he might just be standing up for the Gentiles who were supposed to have a quiet spot to pray and worship, too. This is the 2nd qualification for whether or not our tantrums are justified: is your anger brought on by seeing the hurt of others? That fit... is justified.

Question 6: Jesus was likely standing up for the Gentiles. Who are you looking to stand up for? Is there a certain people group you have a heart for? Is there someone in your family or friends who is being treated unfairly? Is there a person who constantly gets beaten down and it's breaking your heart? Share with the group.

The final nuance here might just be the heart of Jesus's fit. For this one, here's what you need to know about the management of the Temple. Nothing happens in there without the approval of the Chief Priests and some pious leaders. So, whatever is lighting Jesus's fuse... the priests and leaders were allowing to happen. Thus, the implied "you" in Jesus's statement isn't likely the dove sellers, though that's who John says he yells at. He's likely yelling at the leaders for letting it happen. And we know this is the case because, the next verses right after this, in *every* book, say that the leaders of the temple came to challenge him. They ask him, by what authority he's doing this. They ask him to prove it with a miracle. And in the other 3 books, this is when they plot to kill him. So yeah, it has A LOT to do with the leaders allowing it to happen. Here's why this might be what set Jesus off: it's an affront to him *personally*. *He's* hurt by this. Look what he says in verse 16, "stop turning *my* Father's house" into a marketplace. Things just got personal. Jesus is hurt by their actions. A few chapters later he says, "I and the Father are one." So, if this is the Father's house... for Jesus, "it's *my* house, too." And these priests have corrupted that. And so, it's possible Jesus is hurt, personally, by what he sees. So, the last litmus test for whether or not your anger is justified, is whether or not *you're* hurt. It's okay to stand up for yourself. It's okay to feel

something when you've been attacked. It's okay to be angry if you're on the receiving end of the injustice. The good news? That's where this faith community comes in handy. We can be a sounding board in these situations. We have opportunities every week at Connect Group or one-on-one to ask the question, "hey, am I making too much of this? Or am I justified in my anger?" So, ask yourself, "am I being hurt by something, and is it justified to be angry about it?" And if you don't know, let us help.

Question 6: Okay, sounding board time. Anyone?

CLOSING

So, there you go, three occasions where your tantrum might be justified. 1) Are you angry at a system that is set up to be unjust? 2) Are you angry at the hurt of others? And 3) are you angry at because you yourself are being hurt? In John's recounting of this story, after Jesus is confronted by the leaders, they ask him for a miracle, and Jesus says, **"All right...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** (v.19) The religious leaders respond, "it's been complete for 46 years, what do you mean, tear it down?" The next verse tells us, Jesus meant his own body, not the building. He's talking about overcoming the world through his death and resurrection. Here's the point to take with you as we wrap up this series... whatever your fit is, good or bad, justified or not, that thing that has you on the edge of a tantrum, with your blood boiling, Jesus has already conquered it. Yeah, make time for a nap and a snack, (metaphorical or literal.) Be patient, wait on God's timing. And be humble enough to not let your

sin consume you. But if you find yourself in a “righteous anger” situation, go make a difference. Because Jesus has already rebuilt the temple... and overcome whatever has you on the verge of your tantrum.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations
and close in prayer.**