Jan. 21, 2018 Jesus Cleanses the Temple John 2:13-25 (Psalm 127:1-2) Liturgical color: Green

PRAYER OF THE DAY Patient God, Your son, Jesus, expressed anger at abuses and injustice. Help us to show concern, not apathy, for injustice in our world, and teach us to make right all that may be wrong. Amen.

Psalm 127:1 <**A Song of Ascents**. Of Solomon.> Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.

 2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved.

HYMNS Wash, O God, our sons and daughters ELW 445, UMH 605 In his temple now behold him ELW 417 Built on a rock ELW 652 CHORAL My song shall be alway, Gerald Near

**Announcements Prayers**

MMEE reports to Sam by 1/24 home: Barry knee surgery; Dave

Annual Reports past Due

Newsletter deadline this week

Amish Wedding Feast PEP- great! Gladys aunt of Mike & Dennis diagnosis

Welcome Teen Challenge

 birthdays

Children’s Message:

What makes you angry?

Look what made Jesus angry… he over-turned a table

disrespecting God’s house, God’s people and disrespecting worship practices. Jesus sets things right.{table too}

We skipped a verse between last week’s reading and this week’s gospel reading.

Jesus took a family vacation and invited his new friends, the disciples. Remember John the baptizer and Jesus crossed paths, within about 3 days Jesus has Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael following him and they end up at a wedding with the “mother of Jesus”. Really.

John 2: 11 Jesus did this{changing water to wine}, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee {map}, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

 12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

 13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

It may be helpful to note that ‘up to Jerusalem’ refers to up the hill to the city of Jerusalem which sits on a hill. Because Capernaum is miles North of Jerusalem, and also in hill country. Going up to Jerusalem for John’s gospel is literal and figurative… going up, foreshadows something big, something divine, something similar to “seeing heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (Jn 1:51) Unlike the other 3 gospel accounts of the earthly part of Jesus’ life, where they only tell of Jesus going to Jerusalem for Passover once… here in John; if you don’t know how many times Jesus travels for Passover… just guess… {3}. Every detail is carefully crafted in John’s gospel with layers of meaning!

In John’s gospel, Jesus is recorded celebrating Passover 3 times, this is the first. It would be quite normal for Jesus, to celebrate Passover each of the 3 years of his public ministry. As an adult male, who was Jewish, Jesus would go to the Temple in Jerusalem every year to offer sacrifices at Passover. Synagogues were local so people would go there weekly to pray, praise, and read the scriptures. But sacrifices could only be offered in the Temple; so on the holy festivals all able-bodied people who could make the journey, did pilgrimage to Jerusalem to offer thank offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings… and can you imagine them, hundreds, maybe thousands of Jews ‘travelling with goats’[[1]](#footnote-1), pigeons, sheep, or oxen? What a crazy traffic mess that would have been! No, they brought money and bought the animals for sacrifice in the courtyard of the Temple. In this gospel account, John won’t let us forget that the ‘practice of worship and pilgrimage to offer sacrifices is an important pattern eventually culminating in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God’[[2]](#footnote-2) Which will happen on which trip for Passover? You guessed it… {3rd}.

The Lamb of God takes away the sin (singular) of the world! The Passover lamb is a sin offering… and here on this first of the 3 Passovers, Jesus… fresh off vacation with his disciples, his mother, and his brothers, is in Jerusalem… where this “Second” Temple has been under renovation for 46 years! (Remember the 1st Temple, the one Solomon built was destroyed by the Babylonians when the Jewish people were taken into exile in 587 and rebuilt around 530BC.) So Jesus came in to worship, and found the necessary marketplace… and instead of buying the animals to sacrifice for Passover… Jesus took cords, made a whip, and made a BIG messy scene! Imagine the farm show, and someone comes into the barns and drives-out all the cattle and sheep… it’s not a pretty sight when you add doves that are scared, notice Jesus had the dove dealers, remove their own birds. But Jesus was not done, he dumped-out all the cash registers, spilling and mixing the Temple money and the Roman coins… that would have made all the money ritually unclean… and could have caused some fights about what belonged to whom. But Jesus was still not done, Jesus over-turned their tables… don’t forget all the business-people selling, who were also driven out of the Temple courtyard, in the midst of this packed festival gathering. Zeal is a good word to use for this messy exclamation point… remember Jesus is not publically well-known yet, it’s only been a few days since John recognized him way up north near the Sea of Galilee. And the water into wine was not public, only a few people knew about how that happened. So what on earth possessed this man to make such a huge spectacle mess? Well, that explains why “the Jews” said “what sign can you show us for doing this?” {In other words, ‘Explain yourself’ and ‘this better be good, Buddy!’}

Jesus speaks in riddles full of multi-layered meaning… and no one understood until 3 years later, when Jesus had been killed and was raised from the dead… but for now, even the disciples did not understand. Imagine being one of Jesus’ younger brothers. Thinking, really, why did Jesus snap? People have to sell sacrificial animals. What’s wrong with a marketplace helping people keep these essential religious rituals, celebrating the freedom God granted to the enslaved people of Israel, freeing them from Egypt and Pharaoh?

Maybe the problem, is that God did the freeing from Egypt. God did the leading, God did the loving, God did the protecting, God did the providing of water and manna. And here hundreds of years later… God again is freeing, God is providing a lamb, so that the angel of death can Passover those who have been covered by the blood of the lamb, who takes away the sin of the world. God is the one doing the saving; salvation is through Jesus the Christ… not through offering money, and animals… those are signs of appreciation and gratitude for the work that God has done… but they are not acts of salvation accomplished by mere human diligence nor solely human effort. Jesus is God in the flesh, God incarnate, the Lamb of God… and Jesus is fully human, fully angry, full of zeal, full of meaning, full of the truth, that people practicing faith need to re-focus, repent, reconnect with God… because sometimes we forget that God is the one making all things new. Sometimes our sin, our alienation from God, our separation from our neighbors’ cares so we can focus on our own… sometimes this consumes us and we need Jesus to drive-out those misplaced priorities and re-focus us on the amazing gifts of our gracious God. One that can raise a dead body to new life. Through all this havoc, many believed in Jesus the Messiah… they believed in his name, Messiah, the Annointed one who comes to save.

Sermon left-overs:

Lazarus, feeding of 5000 both around passover

‘Jesus is angry, different emotions are part of humanity. Addressing injustice, and improper behavior is something churches often find difficult’[[3]](#footnote-3)

‘Sacrifice/offerings are important but they are not salvation… Christ is only salvation… get priorities straight.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Ibid, below [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Inspired by Working Preacher Narrative Lectionary Podcast for Jan 21, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)