

Daily Discipleship

Third Sunday in Lent (B) – John 2:13-22

The Path of Discipleship: *Through the Maze*

Focus Question: *What this week is worth investing your best energy?*

word of life

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 2:19 (NRSV)

Read John 2:13-22

The Lenten reading shifts to the Gospel of John. In John’s Gospel, Jesus begins his ministry by calling the disciples and attending a wedding at Cana. From Cana, Jesus travels to Jerusalem for the Passover, the first of three Passovers described in the Gospel of John. It is here (in the second chapter of John) Jesus overturns the moneychanger’s tables. He does not wait for the scribes and Pharisees to test him. Instead, Jesus takes the initiative and makes his concerns known.

1. *What surprises you about this text?*
2. *Why is Jesus so angry?*

In the other Gospels, the cleansing of the temple comes at the end of the life of Jesus and after a series of clashes with those in religious authority. It is worth noting the cleansing of the temple is placed in the beginning of John’s Gospel and sparks fly. Jesus goes on the offensive, zealously stirring things up and righting wrongs.

3. *How does this image of Jesus fit with your understanding of Jesus?*

Jesus speaks for God, protecting the temple from misuse. He challenges the common pattern of selling cattle, sheep, and doves in the temple. The moneychangers were exchanging foreign currency with money acceptable for the Passover Festival. The overall scene was chaotic resembling a marketplace rather than God’s house.

4. *Why would Jesus intentionally stir things up?*
5. *What does it mean for Jesus to be filled with zeal?*

All this commotion catches the attention of those in the temple. The Jews challenge Jesus to show them a sign to justify such outrageous behavior, but Jesus’ answer is unclear. His response actually stirs up more concern when he talks about the destruction of the temple. No one wants to imagine a time when their temple might be destroyed. His words about restoring the temple in three days seem like folly. It only confirms their impression of Jesus as a crazy man. These Jews remember it took forty-six long years to rebuild the temple after the Babylonian exile. Yet Jesus is describing the resurrection and his own body as the temple.

6. *Why is Jesus so intent on stirring up the Jews, especially during the Passover?*

There is clarity of purpose in the actions of Jesus despite the controversy or mixed reception from those in authority. This cleansing of the temple and the words of Jesus will make more sense to the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus.

7. *What difference does it make to have this story in the beginning of John’s Gospel as compared to the other Gospels where it is placed at the end of the life of Jesus?*

word among us

The congregation council meeting was going along smoothly. In the past, there had been some heated debate and short tempers. The council tried to deal with its business, knowing there was one item on the agenda that would be tense. Sure enough, as soon as the topic was mentioned, voices began to be raised. One man stood up and demanded everyone listen to him. He even shoved some books off the table as he tried to persuade the group to agree with him.

But once he knocked the books to the floor, another council member gathered her things and walked out of the room. She believed this man had gone too far.

1. *How would you have responded to this man?*
2. *How can you determine if the zeal of a person is from God or not?*
3. *Would your reaction have been different if you agreed or disagreed with the man?*
4. *Describe a time when someone passionately shared his or her opinions and you disagreed with that person, but later realized you were wrong.*

When Jesus walked into the temple, he became angry about the current practices in the temple. Thus, in dramatic fashion he overturned the tables and exposed the people's disrespect for God. At the same time, Jesus angered others who disagreed with him and his actions.

5. *The Gospel lesson shows an angry Jesus who overturned tables. Was his anger justified?*
6. *When (if ever) is anger justified?*

Sometimes Christians can be passive about all things and carry no passion. This picture of an angry Jesus reveals his passion about his Father's house.

7. *What can we learn from this passage?*
8. *What feelings do you have about this description of Jesus?*

Sometimes life can be quite confusing. Life can be like a maze with turns and tangled webs of complex options. We can become consumed with issues of little importance; and we can fail to passionately address obvious wrongs. Yet, it is refreshing to see the clarity of Jesus as he went into the temple. He could see the mockery of the current practices and was willing to address the situation.

It is one thing to identify injustice or wrongdoing, but something else to step forward. That is the challenge. Yet, Jesus invites us to sort out the maze and offers clarity, even when that means confronting the current ways of doing things.

9. *How can you discern if your passion is from God or your own opinion?*
10. *How can you support each other in discerning God's will?*
11. *What this week is worth investing your best energy?*

Prayer

Guide us through the maze of this life. Fill our hearts with passion to serve you. Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19

Luke 19:45-48

last word

Identify one thing you would be willing to invest with your passion and energy.



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