

Disruptive Jesus

3rd Sun. in Lent – 03/03/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 2:13-25 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 19 & 21, “Jesus answered [the Jews], ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’...” “But He was speaking about the temple of His body.”

Introduction

- ✘ Winter weather often disrupts peoples’ travels plans. For example, if you were trying to drive west into the mountains on I-70 right now things would be a bit dicey. Each year, about 60,000 flights get canceled because of bad weather, which costs the airline industry an estimated three billion dollars (<https://www.businessinsider.com/flight-cancellation-cold-weather-storm-blizzard-closing-airports-2019-2>).
- ➔ And it’s not just the cold and snow; not just winter that can be disruptive. Hurricanes and tornadoes disrupt life as we know it. Protesters disrupt meetings. Kids can be disruptive in school. We’ve all experienced a time when an illness or a bad medical diagnosis has disrupted our future plans.

I. A different side of Jesus – Disruptive?

- ✘ In today’s Gospel Reading, Jesus seems to be rather disruptive, doesn’t He? Listen again to verses 14-16: “In the temple He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.”
- ➔ This is a different side of Jesus. This is no Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. He’s not a young Boy in the temple asking deep theological questions, nor the 30-year-old Rabbi turning water into wine, healing the blind, caring for the lepers, or raising someone from the dead. We don’t see Jesus here teaching His disciples with winsome and insightful parables. No, today John shows us a Jesus who is all business; making a whip of cords and turning over tables and driving the money-changers right out of the Temple!
- ✘ Perhaps you would be tempted to join in with many others who hear or read this text and say...or at least think, “I don’t like this Jesus.” No, we prefer the one that goes out after the one lost sheep. We connect more to a gentle, soft-spoken Jesus, who calmly confronts sinners at the same time that He cleverly outwits His enemies. But as you know, we strive to preach and teach the entire counsel of God’s Word – both the easy and the difficult passages. We embrace every Word of the Bible as God’s perfect Word for our Salvation, and that includes today with this less-likable picture of Jesus. Here we see a Jesus “consumed” verse 17 says, with “zeal” for His Father’s house. This is Jesus going full-bore and holding nothing back.
- ➔ It certainly raises some logical questions: Did Jesus just lose His cool? Is this really our loving Savior who willingly took our sins to the cross? What happened to the command to love your neighbor as yourself? What about the Jesus that welcomes sinners and eats with them? Didn’t He tell us, as His disciples, to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us?

II. Jesus acting out of love.

- ✘ Yes, all of that is true. However, it is important to note that this is *not* a different Jesus, nor is He really acting out of character here. As the perfect, sinless Son of God, Jesus shows us today that there actually is a God-pleasing time and place to be disruptive.
- ➔ Think for example of your role as a grandparent or parent or friend who sees another person whose attention has become focused upon sin and falsehood. That kind of focus puts a person’s earthly and spiritual life in great danger, right? So, if I know of a child or friend or fellow

Christian who I believe is at risk of taking action on thoughts of suicide, God of course wants me to disrupt that situation to save a life. Or if I find out that my friend is playing with something dangerous, like a knife or matches or caught in a harmful pattern of drug or alcohol abuse it is God's will that I take action to disrupt that person's unsafe behavior.

- ✘ So what is it that Jesus sees when He comes into the Temple in Jerusalem; the place where God intends that His people will gather to hear His Word proclaimed and to bring their sacrificial offerings in repentance and worship and prayer in order to receive His undeserved gift of love and forgiveness and eternal salvation? He sees something altogether different going on. He sees people focused on making a profit off of the would-be worshippers. He sees a commercial enterprise instead of a house of worship and prayer.

→ Still, though it might not seem like it at first, what we see here is in fact our patient, merciful Jesus acting out of love and compassion for His people. Was He upset? I am sure of it. Was He angry? Probably. So, I get it. These actions, especially when Jesus is referring to and interacting with us, do not mesh too well with our precious views of Jesus as teacher, healer, comforter, and friend.

- ✘ But folks, whether it is us or the Jews and the money changers in the Temple that day, this is our very real, disruptive Jesus; the Jesus who actually loves His enemies enough to disrupt them from their sinful life. He knows that their sins are not good for them; that they are very dangerous; that the wages of this and of all sin is death.

→ So just as it applied to those in the Temple that day, friends, the same goes for you and me. Jesus comes in and He disrupts the sinful things in your life because He loves you enough to hold you accountable for your sins.

- ✘ The truth is Jesus disrupts the chaos of this entire world in order to give us His peace that surpasses all human understanding.

→ This disruptive Jesus loves us enough to disrupt our sinful and destructive thoughts, words and action so that He can exchange it all for His holy life. That's ultimately what He wanted to do for the money-changers in the Temple. They thought Jesus was losing His cool, when in fact Jesus was staying disruptively cool enough here on earth to seek to save them from eternal damnation after this earth.

→ Actually the same goes for me in the manner that God dictates that I deal with you as your pastor. I am to hold you responsible for your sins out of love for your soul. I know that when you sin, it's not good for you; you are literally playing with "fire" because if you continue, you are aligning yourselves with the devil.

- ✘ The easiest thing, for Jesus or your pastor to do would be to say nothing and just let all sinners go to hell. But what does Jesus do? He not only says something – He intentionally does something about our sin. And what He does, He does out of love, because He wants each one of us with Him in heaven.

→ In verses 19-20 "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'It has taken 46 years to build this Temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'"

→ Verse 21 helps us understand what the Jews had blinded themselves to in their unbelief, "But [Jesus] was speaking about the Temple of His body." 1 Corinthians 6:19 takes it to the next step and applies to us as Christians when Paul asks, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"

✘ Of course it's not only the Jews before Jesus who are unwilling and unable to understand where and how and through whom God intends to bless us with His presence. It has been falsely understood for centuries, right up to today.

→ In 1961, the first person to travel into outer space, Soviet cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin radioed back to earth, "I don't see any God up here", which prompted USSR premier Nikita Khrushchev to respond, "We in Russia are officially atheists. We have more evidence for atheism now, because we sent a man into the heavens, and there is no God there. We have more evidence for atheism than ever."

The famous theologian, C.S. Lewis once wrote that if there was a God, you wouldn't relate to Him the way a person on the first floor relates to a person on the second floor – by climbing up to enter into His existence.

→ You see, Christianity is the story of our great God who climbs down and writes Himself into His own Creation. He takes flesh and dwells among us in the person of Jesus. John 1:14 literally refers to the first "Temple", which was called the Tabernacle in the form of a tent that the Israelites put up and took down as they wandered in the wilderness. It says, "And the Word became flesh and tented in our midst, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Yes, Jesus is the new Temple. It is through Jesus that you and I have access to God; that we know Him, even as He knows us.

✘ Jesus allows His earthly body, which is The Temple of God on earth to be utterly abused and destroyed on the cross. And what happened three days later? He raised it back to life – perfectly restored; fully glorified for our salvation.

→ Jesus bursts into our earthly existence and intentionally disrupts all things that would keep you and me from the loving arms of His heavenly Father. He fully understands that this is His Father's house, and He loves His Father. He wants you and me and all people to respect His Father's house so that we can be blessed by Him here on earth, to be made ready and prepared and purified by His blood to be in the Father's house in heaven forever.

✘ Overturning tables and disrupting life is how our loving and gracious Lord works. He disrupts our life. He calls-us-out on our sins. He commands us to stop listening to the devil's lies and start living according to the way He has made us to live now by His grace.

→ Where and when did Jesus' disruptive work start for you; for me? For most of us, it was in the waters of Holy Baptism. For some, it was in the proclamation of His Word and then in Baptism. That's where Jesus interrupts the devil's evil plans and claims us as His own.

→ And now, confirmed in His teaching and truth, Jesus feeds us with His true body and blood in Communion to sustain and nurture us in the one true faith.

III. Time to check our own "tables".

✘ So it is a healthy thing for each and every one of us today and every day to take a serious look at our own "tables"; at our actions and words and thoughts here in the Father's house and out there in our every day lives. Sure, your sins and my sins are different than those in our story today, but we, too, have been unfaithful to God in our own ways.

→ Many people come to church and confess one truth in worship but then live another reality as soon as they walk out of the door. We say "sorry" in one breath while holding tight to our favorite sins when we think no one is watching or listening. In doing this you see, we abuse the reality of Jesus' presence among us every day as God's "Temple"; His holy presence within us. Doing this, we try to dictate our relationship with God, instead of letting God's love and forgiveness have His way in our lives.

Conclusion

- ⌘ This is why we find this Reading in the season of Lent, so that Jesus might do a bit of Lenten housecleaning; overturning the tables of our sinful nature.
 - ➔ He knows what those tables are in your life of course. He is God! Each of us have things in our hearts and minds that put us in Spiritual danger; that must be driven out; things in our world that interfere with our ability to worship faithfully in the Father's house; even sinful things that Jesus needs to take a whip to, so that He can bear them in our place and forgive them by His victorious cross!
 - ➔ It's not enjoyable or easy to have Jesus disrupt our lives, but dear Christians, He does it out of His deep love and mercy for you! He didn't have to do it and we certainly don't deserve it, but as Paul says in verse 29 of our Epistle Reading, He does it "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:29); but so that you and I can have eternal life in our Father's House; in the fullness of His heavenly glory.
 - ➔ All praise and all thanks therefore, to our disruptive Jesus who stops at nothing to save us; nothing to have us with Him forever! Amen.