

March 21-25, 2022 Edition

Following  
The Year Of ^ Jesus Part 12

Jesus Flips Some Tables:  
Lord Of The Temple (conc)

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

\*\*\* These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;o) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

\*\*\*\* Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside](http://www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside)). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

**Monday Reflection:** Last week we traced the various iterations of the Temple from creation to Eden to the Tabernacle and Temple and then to Jesus' body, the body of each believer and finally the "spiritual Temple" that God is using each believer as living stone to build. We will look at the final iteration of the Temple later in the week but first I'd like to deal with the number one question I received after last weekend's lesson- how could Jesus get so mad? Isn't getting mad a "sin"? And wasn't Jesus sinless? So what's the deal, Pastor Ed?

I'm glad you asked- it's a great question. Let's start with the story we're currently looking at in Jesus' life- it's found in John chapter 2 and tells about the time Jesus "cleansed" the Temple by making a whip and flipping over some tables. You can read the whole thing if you weren't with us last weekend but here's what John said about Jesus' emotional state:

*Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me." John 2:17 (NLT)*

John doesn't really assign any emotion to Jesus when he explains the cleansing of the Temple. But John does quote a prophecy that states that Jesus would be "passionate" about His Father's house. Most translations use the English word "zeal" but what is zeal?

*Zeal: fervor for a person, cause, or object; eager desire or endeavor; enthusiastic diligence; ardor.*

Zeal does not require a person to be angry and while John never says Jesus was "angry" it sure seems like He was, doesn't it? I mean He made a whip out of reeds and flipped over some tables and "drove" the moneychangers and sacrificial livestock sellers out of the Temple.

By the way the question of why Jesus got so "zealous" is not really dealt with by John. We have made a lot of assumptions over the last 2,000 years (the moneychangers cheating the people of God, the sellers of sacrificial animals cheating the people, etc.) but that's all they are is assumptions. In fact recent scholarship has found that the Sadducees were not cheating the people with exorbitant exchange rates or high animal prices. Maybe it was the image of the Tyrian god Melqart's head on the shekels used in the Temple (the Sadducees would only accept the Tyrian half shekel at the Temple because it was the most consistent coin in the Roman world when it came to actual silver content). Maybe it was that the marketplace had recently been moved from the Mount of Olives to the Temple courts for convenience. I don't know that we'll ever find out the exact reason this side of Heaven but we do know what it did to Jesus- it filled him with "zeal" and He made a whip and drove them out.

This "zealousness" is usually interpreted by us humans as "anger". And maybe it was- maybe it wasn't. But we do know this- Jesus does get angry while on this earth. We also know God gets angry so anger in and of itself must not be a "sin". We'll discuss tomorrow in detail the times that we know for sure Jesus got angry and what we can learn about that when it comes to our own emotions but for today maybe spend some time thinking about why you think Jesus got so "zealous" about what He saw in the Temple and, considering that all believers in Jesus are now the "Temple of the Holy Spirit", what do you think Jesus would say about how you're treating His Father's house (your body).

**Tuesday Reflection:** Today we're going to look at the emotional side of Jesus- namely the times the gospels tells us that Jesus got angry. And you don't have to look very far- Jesus often got angry while He was on this earth. Here's one example where Jesus is in the synagogue in Capernaum one Sabbath and a man with a withered hand was in the crowd and the Pharisees were waiting to see if Jesus would heal the guy (the Pharisees taught that it

was illegal to heal on the Sabbath). Jesus saw the guy and probably knew it was a trap but He didn't let that stop Him:

*Since it was the Sabbath, Jesus' enemies watched him closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the deformed hand, "Come and stand in front of everyone." Then he turned to his critics and asked, "Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?" But they wouldn't answer him. But they wouldn't answer him. He looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! Mark 3:4-5 (NLT)*

The Pharisees didn't answer Jesus because they knew He had outmaneuvered them- their own interpretation of the law said it was permitted to do good on the Sabbath even though it also said it was not permitted to heal on the Sabbath. So they won't answer Him. What is Jesus' response? Anger and sadness. Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm not angry, I'm just disappointed..."? Well Jesus is both angry and disappointed in the Pharisees. I wonder what kind of tone Jesus used when He told the guy, "hold out your hand"? I think it might have been just a tad snippy. Or maybe more than a tad. In this case Jesus got angry because of the way the Pharisees interpretations of the God's Old Testament law had the opposite impact of what God wanted.

Another time Jesus we are told that Jesus got angry is the time when He was teaching and some kids wanted to see Jesus. Everyone was drawn to Jesus and kids are no exception. One of my favorite parts of the TV series The Chosen is how often they show Jesus' love for kids. He plays with them and treats them like they are the most amazing people on the face of the earth (which to Him they were). Jesus' teaching was done mainly outside wherever He happened to be and He'd find a place where everyone could see Him and then He'd just start teaching. Have you ever been to a place where that kind of teaching was happening? Families came and the parents were listening but the kids were probably doing what kids do best- disrupt. At least what they do seems like a disruption to us, doesn't it? WE'RE TRYING TO LEARN SOMETHING HERE YOU LITTLE PUNKS! SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP!

But Jesus scolds the disciples for trying to create a quiet environment for learning:

*One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children." Mark 10:13-14 (NLT)*

Mark says that when Jesus saw what was happening He got "angry". Not at the kids but at the disciples who thought they knew what was important. They were wrong. Nothing was more important to Jesus than those kids. I'm not sure what Jesus meant when He said that "the Kingdom Of God belongs to those who are like these children". Heck just thinking about that could keep you busy for a week. But Jesus did get angry when the disciples stood in the way of the kids blessing.

This is one of the values that drives Riverside as much as any other- when kids come to Riverside our first and foremost goal is that when they leave they feel like they've been blessed. We could put a ton of energy into teaching them more Bible or teaching them how to sit like civilized members of society rather than being as wild as pigs (I owe that phrase to my late brother in law and Riverside's former worship pastor Jeff Martin and it makes me happy to be able to reference him here almost 5 years after his passing) but we've only got

them for about 30 minutes a week and we have only so much energy and resources at Riverside so we had to decide what was our highest value when it came to what we gave the kids who come to Riverside and we decided that it's more important that they feel blessed than that they learn to recite the books of the Bible. They can learn that stuff at home or later in life but if they don't learn that Jesus loves them and that He wants them to be blessed then it won't matter what we teach them now- they won't want anything to do with church when they leave their parents homes. We'll continue this discussion on the anger of Jesus (and our own human anger for that matter) tomorrow but for today maybe spend a few minutes thinking about what it means that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children.

**Wednesday Reflection:** This week we're looking at Jesus cleansing the Temple and wondering about why it was ok for Him to get angry. Even though John never uses the word "angry" to describe what Jesus was going through (John uses the word "zeal" to describe Jesus' mental frame of mind) it's undeniable that Jesus gets angry in other places in the gospels and we looked a couple of them yesterday. Today we'll look at another:

*In the morning, as Jesus was returning to Jerusalem, he was hungry, and he noticed a fig tree beside the road. He went over to see if there were any figs, but there were only leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" And immediately the fig tree withered up. Matthew 21:18-19 (NLT)*

I don't know about you but this one always seemed so strange to me. Why does He wither the fig tree? I've had some people tell me it wasn't because Jesus was angry- He was just making a point. I think that explanation only exists because we think it's somehow wrong if Jesus shows emotion- especially anger. We've sanitized Jesus over the years and we are uncomfortable thinking about Him showing anger. But He did. Quite often. We looked at two instances where the gospels describe Him as angry but this story doesn't come out and say that.

But He was.

At least I think He was. I mean, He withers a tree for not having fruit on it. If we stop thinking that it's wrong for Jesus to be angry then wouldn't that be our first impression of why He did it? So why would He be angry? Well first of all, He's hungry and sees a fig tree with leaves on it. A fig tree sprouts figs before it leafs out. So usually if you see a fig tree with leaves then you can assume it has figs that you could eat. But when He gets closer He sees it doesn't have any fruit. Bummer (for Jesus and the fig tree ;o)

But this is also just days before He will die. He knows it. You can see the stress building and this is just one example (I could give you several but for those of us who don't think Jesus could feel stress I give you the sweat drops like blood that He experiences while praying three different times in the garden of Gethsemane that if there was any other way could God please show Him sooner rather than later?) of it. But I think that's why He withers the tree- He's stressed out and it's making Him a bit snippy. How could Jesus ever be "snippy"? Because He's not only fully God- He is also fully human. I imagine He's not sleeping well (would you sleep well knowing what was coming?). I imagine He's not eating well (we know earlier in His ministry His mom comes and scolds Him about not eating when He should). Jesus is exhibiting typical human responses to the stress of His life but it doesn't mean He sinned.

We need to learn this lesson from Jesus. The Bible talks a lot about how we should handle our anger. I like this advice:

*In your anger do not sin. Ephesians 4:26 (NLT)*

That must mean we can be angry without sinning. In fact, a more literal translation of that verse would be, "Be angry. But don't sin." It's almost a command to get angry when anger is the proper response. Just don't let your anger turn into sin. How do we let our anger turn into sin, you ask? By refusing to let go of it. In the Sermon On The Mount Jesus teaches quite a bit about anger:

*You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! Matthew 5:21-22 (NLT)*

Now I have a feeling I know what you're thinking- Pastor Ed, how can you be talking about learning to be angry without sinning when Jesus clearly says that if you are angry with someone then you are subject to judgment?

Because not all anger is created equal. The Greek word for anger found in Ephesians 4:26 is different than the Greek word for anger found in Matthew 5:22. The anger Paul mentions in Ephesians is the proper response to injustice and carelessness. That kind of anger is quick and dealt with promptly. The anger Jesus is talking about is that seething hatred that we nurse and tend like a fire so it doesn't go out. We let the person we're angry at take up space in our hearts and we spend all day thinking about what we hope happens to that person or what we should do to them.

That's the kind of anger Jesus warns about. The other kind we are encouraged to express as long as it doesn't lead us to sin. How do we know if our anger is causing us to sin? Look at the fruit- what does my anger produce? Is it just for me to let off some steam and make myself feel better by blowing up at someone else? Does it cause me to be eaten up inside with bitterness and hatred dreaming of all the ways that the person who done-me-wrong will get what they've got coming to them? Or is there some positive aspect to your anger that will bring about stronger relationships? We all have to deal with our own anger- just make sure your anger is making the world a better place (like Jesus' did) rather than just being used as a weapon to hurt someone that hurt you.

**Thursday Reflection:** Today I'd like to spend some time thinking over another aspect of this story of Jesus cleansing the Temple- how it shows what our "deal" with Jesus is. When Jesus drives out the moneychangers and livestock salesmen He says this:

*Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!" John 2:15-16 (NLT)*

Why does Jesus care so much about what the Sadducees do in the Temple? Because Jesus cares deeply about God's Temple. He always has and He always will. As we read as a group through the entire Bible in a year with the Bible Recap one thing I'm really noticing (we are currently in the final pages of Deuteronomy- the 5th book of the Old Testament) one thing that keeps jumping out at me is how often God reaffirms His covenant with Israel. He keeps telling them that if they fail to live up to the stipulations in the covenant (mainly the 10 Commandments) and cease to be His Holy Nation and His Kingdom Of Priests then God will withdraw and they won't like what happens next one little bit. They keep reaffirming their covenant with God but they continually fail miserably.

The first century Temple that Jesus interacts with so often is full of corruption and abuse. Jesus cares and so He cleanses the Temple (momentarily). We may be surprised by Jesus' reaction but it's the "deal" that Israel made with God- if you get off track I will send prophets

to help remind you to get back on track. And sometimes those prophets will deliver some painful news but it's all designed to bring Israel back to an agreement they willingly made (even after God warned them) repeatedly throughout the Old Testament.

Ok, so God cares desperately about His Temple- what does that have to do with us? Only this:

*Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)*

Do you see now? Your body is now the Temple of God. You carry around with you the God's Holy Spirit which means what exactly? What is the deal that we enter into with God when we become followers of Jesus? Well part of that deal is that you are no longer your own. You have agreed to become God's possession. Throughout the New Testament we are warned over and over again about God's passion for us. How committed He is to living up to His side of the deal by using everything we go through to transform us more and more into the image of Jesus. So when we (God's Temple through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit) get off track God sends us "opportunities" to get back on track- just like He did with Israel. Sometimes that will mean that God brings painful things into our lives to wake us up.

I think that may be why John puts the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple here in chapter 2 of his gospel. The other 3 writers place this story at the end of Jesus' ministry right before His arrest and eventual execution. Theologians have argued for 2,000 years whether that means that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice or if John just chose to move the story to the beginning of his gospel because he had a point to make. I spent all of Monday in last weeks reflections talking about why that's not out of the question and why it's not a blow to the reliability of the gospels if he did move it- if you're interested go read all about it (you can download last weeks reflections from [EagleRiverside.com//reflections-download](http://EagleRiverside.com//reflections-download)). Ultimately I don't really care one way or the other which is true (but I believe with all of my heart that this story is indeed true)- I guess I lean more towards the idea that this story only happened once but John places it here for a reason.

What reason could John possibly have? Maybe to show us in one chapter what to expect from our "deal" with Jesus. John chapter 2 has two stories in it- the turning of water to wine at a wedding party and the cleansing of the Temple. What if John put these two stories together so that we'd see a snapshot of what we can expect in our relationship with Jesus. Sometimes Jesus will do exactly what we think He should- just like the story of the changing the water to wine. There was a problem. Someone asked Jesus to step in and fix it. He stepped in and not only fixed the problem but did so beyond anything that anyone could have imagined. He made 150 gallons of the best wine anyone had ever tasted. I don't know about you but that's the way I think prayer should work. And according to John chapter 2 that's the way it does work- sometimes.

But sometimes we get off track. We forget the "deal" we entered into with Jesus and we start to treat Him like a cosmic errand boy. Do this, Jesus. Do that, Jesus. Faster Jesus! Why aren't you doing what I'm asking You to do, Jesus?

That is not the deal you (or anyone else for that matter) has with Jesus.

The "deal" we enter into with Jesus we'll leave for tomorrow but for today maybe spend some time thinking about how you being the Temple of the Holy Spirit may shed some light on why Jesus cares so much about how you do (and don't) live your life.

**Friday Reflection:** So today I want to pick up on the theme we were focusing on yesterday- that our bodies are now the Temple of the Holy Spirit and that's why Jesus cares so much about how we choose to live:

*Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me." John 2:17 (NLT)*

Jesus' passion or zeal for the Temple is still very evident today in the lives of His followers. He cares so deeply about you becoming all you were designed to become that if necessary He will "cleanse His Temple". Yes, sometimes Jesus will do exactly what you think He should on the timeline you consider to be ideal. Other times though you will find Jesus in your life flipping tables and making demands. Gasp! Demands?!?!? Why would Jesus ever do such a thing? Because that's the deal. He's always been completely up front about it:

*If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who keeps his life for himself shall lose it; and anyone who loses his life for me shall find it again. Matthew 16:24-25 (NLT)*

In order to be a follower of Jesus you have to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus. Why would anyone do that? Because in "losing" your own life you end up finding your true life. You will never find your true destiny until you lay down your own life on the altar and sacrifice it to Jesus. Then He gives you back everything that is good for you and keeps from you everything that's harmful to you. It doesn't always feel good- in fact it often feels like He's made a whip out of reeds and is busy flipping tables in our lives to wake us up to the fact that we've strayed from the deal. Even the title, "Lord", should clue us in to what kind of deal we are making with the Creator of the Universe.

If you notice Jesus flipping over some tables in your life remember this- it's not meant to harm you. I showed a clip from the Lord Of The Rings a few weeks back where Gandalf the Wizard tells Bilbo Baggins that, "I'm not trying to rob you... I'm trying to help you." It didn't feel good to Bilbo at the time but it was necessary for Gandalf to get tough with Bilbo and in essence flip over a few tables- necessary not only for Gandalf but necessary for Bilbo.

We have that kind of dynamic with Jesus. He's not trying to hurt us when He flips over some tables in His own Temple (remember our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit)- He's trying to help us live up to our destiny. What we created to do and become. We humans have a very predictable habit of getting off track and when that happens Jesus comes to His Temple to flip a few tables if that's what it's going to take. There was a guy named Saul in the book of Acts who hated Jesus and His church. He took it upon himself to stamp out the fledgling community and was on his way to Damascus to arrest more Christians and have them killed when He met the resurrected Jesus on the way:

*As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." Acts 9:3-6 (NLT)*

What's going on here? Jesus is flipping over some tables in Saul's life. And we know what happens- Saul (who had entered into a "deal" with God to live his life the way God intended) is shown the error of his ways and he goes from the greatest opponent of the Christian Church to becoming its biggest proponent. Paul almost singlehandedly carries the gospel of Jesus into the Roman Empire and the rest as they say is history. And Saul (who would later go by the name of Paul) is changed as well.

That's all God wants- to transform us into the likeness of His Son so that we can become what He dreamed of us becoming when He dreamed us up before the foundations of the earth were even laid. Paul changed the world but he never would have if Jesus hadn't flipped some tables in his life. Later that same Paul would write this to the church in Rome:

*You didn't think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others you would distract God from seeing all your misdoings and from coming down on you hard? Or did you think that because he's such a nice God, he'd let you off the hook? Better think this one through from the beginning. God is kind, but he's not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change. Romans 2:3-4 (MSG)*

Can you see how Paul is speaking from personal experience? John chapter 2 shows us that while sometimes God will do exactly what we think He should on the timeline we ourselves would pick (think of all those people on your social media feeds posting #blessed all over their walls) He also promises that when/if we get off track He is committed to flipping all the tables required in our lives to get us back on track.

So, where do you see yourself in all of this. I have to admit talking and writing about all of this has made me very aware of the areas of my own life where maybe I should start doing some rearranging before Jesus has to step in and do it for me. Maybe that's what we should all be considering this weekend- what can I do to do a makeover in my life so that Jesus doesn't have to do an "extreme makeover" that may not feel very good.

Jesus is awesome!