

3 S. in Lent 3/7/21
John 2:13-22 B

SO THE JEWS SAID TO HIM, "WHAT SIGN DO YOU SHOW US FOR DOING THESE THINGS?" JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP." THE JEWS THEN SAID, "IT HAS TAKEN FORTY-SIX YEARS TO BUILD THIS TEMPLE, AND WILL YOU RAISE IT UP IN THREE DAYS?" BUT HE WAS SPEAKING OF THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY.

Are you a lover of money? Then you can relate to and understand the anger of the Jews in our lesson today. They had a nice thing going.

John tells us "The Passover of the Jews was at hand" (v. 13). When pilgrims went up to Jerusalem for the Passover, they had to offer the appropriate sacrifices – sheep or oxen or pigeons, depending on their situation and station in life. And, the oldest male in the family had to pay the temple tax with the correct coinage. It was quite impractical for these travelers to transport the needed animals with them – they traveled by walking through a desert, after all. So, the priests allowed a market to be set up in the temple, with the clear intent to take a piece of the action for themselves. After all, the Evangelist Luke tells us they were "lovers of money" (Lk 16:14). The sellers would sell the needed animals for the sacrifices in the temple and the Jewish leaders would make a little money for themselves.

Likewise with the needed coinage for the temple tax. The law required that no human image could be on the coin. The Roman rulers loved to put images of themselves on coins, so that everyone knew what region the coins came from. So, like the animals, the moneychangers sold the proper shekel coins, without human likeness, for the temple tax, and

the Jews leaders filed their pockets at the same time. Luther called it “crass commercialism”.

And along comes this Jesus guy,

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. And He told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.”

And the Jews, the Jews were angry, fuming, and they get in Jesus' face, “Who do you think you are? What sign do you show us for doing these things (cf. v. 18)? Jesus answers, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” And the Evangelist tells us, “The Jews said, ‘It has taken us forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days’ (vv. 19-20)?

Do you understand what is happening in our lesson this morning? These guys are lovers of money. The market they allowed to be set up in the temple is all about money – cash money for them. When Jesus talks about destroying the temple, what they hear Him saying is that He is going to take their income, this nice little thing they've got going in the temple, away from them. And they are livid.

The Jewish leaders were lovers of money, and they set up a convenient marketplace in the temple for their own greedy purpose. And you hear that, and you say, “Those nasty people! I would never do that to the temple of God. I'm so glad I'm not like that!”

OK. Well, the Bible -- Paul in 1st Corinthians the 6th chapter in fact -- teaches us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Co 6:19). Have you defiled that temple? Have you always used that temple of your body to glorify God and serve your neighbor, or have used that temple for

you own greedy, self-serving purposes? The answer is: Sure ya have! I asked you a minute ago if you are a lover of money. Don't be shy? Yes, yes, you can put on a costume that looks so pretty and nice to impress your neighbor and win their praise, but God, the Lord your God, knows your heart.

And, the love of money isn't the only thing in your heart. There's idolatry and lust and anger and bitterness and jealousy. You've used your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, to commit adultery, to lie, to deceive, to cheat, to steal, to cross your fingers for good luck rather than folding your hands in pray. You've used that temple of the Holy Spirit to do the things God tells you not to do and to not do the things the Lord your God commands that you do.

Yes, that would be you, "Oh, no, I would never defile the temple of God!" Well, you have and, in fact, you do it every day.

We must ever remember what happened in the temple in Jerusalem. When John the Baptizer saw Jesus, the Baptizer said of Him, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). All of those lambs and oxen and pigeons and animals sacrificed in the temple -- all pointed ahead to Jesus. The book of Hebrews tells us, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (He 10:4). So, the sin of all the world ... was placed on THE Lamb of God, Jesus.

And true to His Word, the temple of His body was destroyed – as it was whipped, beaten, nailed to the cross. It was destroyed as He gave up His soul in death, as punishment for the sin of the world. And, the third day, He rose again to bring you the forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation that He won for you.

And where, and how, does He do that? Here, at His Father's House.

Here, in the waters of Holy Baptism ... the hearing of God's Words of eternal life ... as you eat and drink the life-giving Body and Blood of your Savior ... God forgives you and makes you a new creation in Christ so that may honor Him in the temple of your body, with your thoughts, your words, and your deeds.

Our Old Testament lesson this Sunday is the 10 Commandments. The Commandments teach us what the holy life is that God demands we live. We are not to fear, love, and trust in the idols we have chosen and made for ourselves. We are to call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. We are to hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. We are to honor, serve, and obey those over us. We are not to hurt or harm in our neighbor in their body, even the body of the unborn in their mother's womb. We are to treat marriage as a gift from God. We are not to steal. We are to talk to our neighbor, not about our neighbor. We are not to have a sinful desire for anyone or anything that belongs to our neighbor, but be content with what God has given us.

God has set us apart to be a holy people just as the temple was a holy place. Yet, when we hear how God desires we live, what is the natural reaction of our flesh, "Who are you to tell me how to live my life? Who do you think you are? What sign do you show us for doing these things (cf. v. 18)? God has created us, knitting us together in our mother's wombs ... redeemed us in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, ... and sanctified us in the waters of our Baptism. We belong to Him.

Especially in this season of Lent, we are of our continual need for cleansing that we may be rid of the sin that plagues us. Daily, we must return to the waters of our baptism to drown our flesh so that our hearts and souls and our lives do not become a marketplace for sin and shame

and vice. In repentance, Christ forgives and cleanses so that we may be a temple of the living God. Through the means of grace, God strengthens that we may die to sin and unholy desires, and that in the temple of our bodies we may truly boast of Christ.