

J.j.

Let's Change Temples

✠ Homily for Lent 3b -- 4. March., A.D. 2018 ✠

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John 2:13-22 13The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. 15Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16He told those who were selling the doves, **'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!'** 17His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' 18The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' 19Jesus answered them, **'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'** 20The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' 21But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. *(Gal. 1:3-5)*

My sermon title, **Let's Change Temples**, is about changes in our worship of God. Of course, change is inevitable--in our selves, communities, gov't--in the world. But our first lesson today speaks of a **surprise change**—the Ten Commandments were presented to the children of Israel out there in the Sinai desert. *[Show the 10]* These stayed central to God's chosen people down to the time of Christ because of how important their ancestors' rescue from the slavery of Egypt had been.

Then our Gospel text today presents us with **another change**. It may sound rather simple: when Jesus chased the money changers out, he was just cleaning up some bad practices at temple worship. You know, bad habits develop, and so every once in a while things need to be straightened out again--like a spring housecleaning. But there's more at stake here as we shall see—let's look first at:

The Old Temple, or, The Way We've Always Done It

Point 1, It's All About Convenience--Or Is It?

Every Jew wanted to go to Passover at least once in their life--some went often. So Jesus went to the Passover temple celebration, and:

"14In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. 15Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!'"

Wow! I wonder who got whipped! So much for 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.'

One way to look at this is that the noise and confusion surrounding the selling and buying made it impossible to concentrate on quiet devotion. Let's pretend that this church building is the temple building, and pretend we have a solid wall out there around this half of our parking lot with a small gate. Then beyond that another wall all around our property line. It was in that outer court where all the noise was—cattle mooing, sheep bleating, doves cooing—what a commotion!

But that was the way they'd always done it- - - - -or was it.
Jews used to bring their own animals from home at Passover—this is new--just buy it when you get there—how convenient and economical--and everybody gained. Temple visitors could travel at ease—the sellers made a **profit**, some of which was a kick-back to the High Priest. Nice! Real nice commercialization of worship!

How have Lutheran worship practices changed over the years? To better or worse? Not many years ago we got a new green hymnal where the liturgy gave lay people more leadership roles--reading Scriptures, e.g., distributing Communion, etc. Now there's an even newer hymnal--bigger and better. So the way we've always done it has changed overtime, **but,—and note this—within the boundaries of the great tradition of liturgical worship.** If we could ask Jesus today, “How're we doin'?”--what would He say? At Passover in Jerusalem our Lord was angry about their worship traditions--the noise, the profit motive, but was it only about *convenience*? **Point 1?**

Point 2, Another Look Shows Up Deeper Issues.

After the Temple cleansing and they were out of business, the Jews had a question: **18 [They] then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?'** The word ‘sign’ is an important theological word--it showed that the Jews knew this Messiah figure was doing more than just cleaning up the place a bit. They wanted to know who authorized this violent attack—they wanted proof. Their faith was shaken--were they really sinning against God Most High? Was there a big change coming and they didn't know it?

Big changes have taken place in our day in some worship traditions. I have a folder titled “The Big Worship Goof” by --(web name I presume)-- iMonk. The subtitle is, A Baptist Looks at “Worship.” He's writing about those “big box” Bible churches or Evangelicals on Sunday AM. He says: - - - - ->

Hmmm? Profit? Where have I heard that word before? Is it in our text? Well, not in so many words, but ... there *were* the money-changers. Toward the end iMonk writes, “We have a lot of happy people right now. They have no idea what Biblical worship is outside of the context of their favorite songs played by a kickin' band. They have little idea of [their work as worship, serving their families as worship, serving their neighbor as worship.] [What we need is to] hear the prophetic warnings about God's disgust with much of Israel's “big show” worship culture.”—> (I've made a few copies of this folder—if you're interested, ask me.)

What about that kind of change? Many a Lutheran congregation has moved toward “contemporary” worship to one degree or another. To change or not to change, that is the question. In the Lutheran Church we attend a Service. Service has a two-fold meaning: 1. God serves us His grace and forgiveness through the “means of grace,” the Word and Sacraments.

By those means the Holy Spirit renews our trust in God's free gift of life forever. God strengthens our love for Him and for our neighbor—that's God's Service to us.

Does anyone- I mean, really, seriously- have any idea what is actually happening within the worship culture of evangelicals? We have, within a matter of 50 years, completely changed the entire concept of what is a worship service. We've adopted an approach that demands ridiculous levels of musical, technical and financial commitment and resources.

We have tied ourselves to the Christian music industry and its endless appetite for change and

profit.

Why do I call this a goof? Because, there is no way for this to end well. This is like a NASCAR car with the throttle stuck open. We're stuck on a roller coaster and we can't get off.

The second meaning is that **we serve God**—we accept His gifts and respond with prayer, praise, thanksgiving and offerings.

Did you hear that little word ‘praise?’

Indeed, praise is one part of our worship, but the kind of service in the ‘big box’ churches is almost all praise: a “praise band” plays nothing but “praise songs,” and the young people are taught that’s all there is to church—do we want that?

Do they confess their sins? Do they hear words of absolution? Do they declare their faith in the Triune God by reciting a Creed? Do they receive the Body and Blood of our Savior?

Is that really a change for the better? Or are the younger generations being cheated?

Part II, The Old Temple Is Gone—Where’s the New?

First, Jesus Indeed Brings a Great Change as the Temple Jews Feared.

Not only does our Lord Jesus bring a new Temple—He **Is** the New Temple.

When the Jews asked for a sign,

19Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

20The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' 21But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

Our Lord was nearing the end of His days upon earth—he said so right here.

In his earthly body born of Mary, he would carry the burden of the whole world’s sin.

He faced a huge responsibility--the history of the world was at a turning point.

He carried the world’s sin to the cross—there he paid the price for all sin, & yes ours.

Now these Ten Commands, which we have not kept, serve only to accuse us of our sins in order to turn us again and again to the cross.

How thankful are we that our Lord established his New Testament in the Temple of his body and blood, given and shed for you and me for the forgiveness of sins?

He Himself Is the New Temple!

Think about this: our calendars since the Gregorian revision in 1582 count backwards down to zero at Christ’s birth, then count forward from the year 1,—you know, BC, Before Christ and A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord.

So all time, all history turns around Him and the meaning of his life and death.

And his promise concerning the temple of his body, “I will raise it up?” He kept it!

Last Point, Are We at Another Pivot Point in History?

- Commentators say World War III has been going on in the Middle East.
- The information revolution left the industrial revolution in the dust, and our heads are swimming with new data, images, opportunities that have us electronically dazed.
- Our country is sorely divided and we are again fighting politically about guns and our constitution.

It is not hard to believe that the end of all things is near, **OR** great change is coming.

We need an anchor for our souls, and here are two—our second lesson today—**18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.** (1 Cor. 1:18)

And Jesus said, **22 ('Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.) and [his disciples] believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.**

His disciples believed--the Scripture promises came to life for them in Jesus the Word made flesh—and they proclaimed far and wide that we too, who believe in Jesus’, will rise to life everlasting.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

S.D.g.

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[1660 words] Baskerville 11; Georgia 10; Arial 10; Capitals 9.*