

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son. The words of Jesus we consider for this morning are found in the Gospel of John 2:13-22.

“13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." 18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.”

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed.

Have you ever noticed how we have a tendency to use things for purposes they weren't intended for?

Even as a 6 month old child my daughter has already taken this practice up. We have purchased several items specifically designed to aid the teething process. But largely she loves to chew on everything but those things. It's not that she never uses them, but other things seem to be of more interest.

As a child I decided to use my Radio Flyer sled as a ladder. I propped it up against the stairs and proceeded to climb up the wood on the bottom that was only intended to support the top. One slip with wet snow boots and I was soon sporting a fresh new cut from where my chin met the top of the metal sled.

One day in the back of my father's pickup I decided that my foot was the perfect tool for the process of bending nails over on some boards in the bed of the vehicle. Yet another slip in my life and I was greeted with a nail going through my shoe and into my foot. I must've looked very silly walking into the house with that board affixed to my foot.

On many mechanics toolboxes you can see a sticker that reads, "Use the proper tool." A simple reminder used to show the mechanic that a wrench is not a hammer.

But what about God's house? Are we using church for the reason it's intended? Unlike using a wrench as a hammer, a sled as a ladder, or your parent's nose as a teething toy, using God's house for a reason unintended has eternal consequences.

Therefore our Lord reminds us today that **"God's house has one purpose."** Therefore we pray, sanctify us by Your truth oh Lord, Your word is truth. Amen.

The use of God's house which can come in many forms has been abused since man has fallen into sin. In our text we find Jesus specifically cleansing the temple. But as the word of our Lord says **"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."** Mat. 18:20 Where ever two or three are gathered in God's name, there we have church.

We have that shown to us in the example of Cain and Abel. Both Cain and Abel offered up a sacrifice to God but the outcome was very different. As we will see the difference for Cain and Abel and what the Jewish people were lacking as a whole was a matter of the heart.

"Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business."

During the time of the Passover the population of Jerusalem grew by a great amount. People from miles away would come to celebrate this festival. It was a great business opportunity for those who sold the animals and changed one currency to another. There would be a constant presence of people selling in the temple year round. But during the Passover the number of sellers would swell. It's much like business' now who do the vast majority of their business during the holidays.

Being in the temple wasn't the thing that angered Jesus. He said, **"Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"** This statement reveals to us what so upset Jesus. It was the fact that the people who were selling for the purpose of doing business. It was for the purpose of making a profit and not for the worship of God.

This attitude caused Jesus to respond in this way, **"When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables."**

It wasn't the site of the temple being busy, filled with people and with the animals that were being sacrificed that upset Jesus. Why would it? He wants His house to be filled! He wanted the people their remembering the Passover. But they didn't see Him in the Passover. Get out of my house if this is what you're here to do Jesus is saying. Do not come here to make a dollar.

Even before this and the other time Jesus cleansed the temple the Lord became sick of the attitude of those who came into His temple. Isaiah 1:11 **"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats."** How could the Lord say this? He commanded the people to make these sacrifices, didn't He? But it was because of the attitude of the heart that made the Lord become sick of them.

Do we have this problem? We obviously don't offer up animal sacrifices, but do we have a problem with the condition of our hearts when we worship? Do we need to have Jesus come and cleanse the temple of our hearts?

Do I play at church just because I like to play the instrument? Do I sing in the choir just out of the love for music? Do I go to this church just because my parents do? Do I go to this congregation only because I've been a member so long? Do I go to this church because I want some social interaction? Do I come here because the congregation is close to where I live?

These are very hard questions. Some of these and others I've asked myself in my lifetime. And doesn't Satan love to torture us with them. 'I'm a hypocrite' you say of yourself. I don't always pay attention as well as I should. I start day dreaming. I can't stand because I hurt. I sing so poorly. I don't believe I ponder on what I'm receiving well enough in the Lord's Supper.

Do you know what these things show about us? It shows that we are sinners.

But my dear friends, I know why you all are coming here. The reason you come back here is because you need them taken away from you. The Lord has come into your hearts and has given you rest from your sins. And from Sunday to Sunday sins pile up again. This will happen until we are called home to heaven. And that is why you will continue to come. To find rest for your souls.

What a wonderful gift the Lord has given you. The faith to believe that His Only Begotten Son has taken away all of your sins. Jesus, who comforts you and brings peace to your soul. The true reason why you're here. The One who gives you a new Spirit who allows you to say in response to the devil.

Lord, I do play for You because You love me! Lord, I do sing to You because You love me! Lord, thank You for giving me faithful parents who are bringing me up in the fear of You! Lord, it's not that I've been coming here for so long, but it's because You are there in truth and purity. Lord, I do get lonely sometimes, but I find You in church! Lord, I will drive wherever I need to go to find You! Thank You Lord for giving me such a faith. May Your name be praised!

The Jews asked Jesus that day, "**What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?**" They wanted to know why they should listen to Him. "**Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'**" Jesus foretold His resurrection which is soon coming upon us in our church year. A way to show those people there that day that when you hear I am alive again you will know that I am the One who God sent.

John 4:23 "**But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."**

The message you have heard of Jesus is what brought you to faith. The message you hear of God's Son is the one that keeps you in faith. The message you hear of the Alpha and Omega is the one that will sustain you until Jesus comes again.

"God's house has one purpose" the declaration of the fact that you're a sinner and the fact that Jesus Christ died and rose again as He promised in the temple that day. Thank God that Jesus was so faithful in the worship of His Father that He laid down His life for us all and conquered death by rising again for our sake. Amen.