

Jesus is the true Temple

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[0 : 0 0] now we'll read together in our bibles from john chapter 2 we're thinking about the seven signs in john's gospel revealing jesus glory last week his first sign where he turned water into wine to allow joy and celebration to continue a wedding and now john moves from there to where jesus clears the temple courts so this is john chapter 2 verse 13 when it was almost time for the jewish passover jesus went up to jerusalem in the temple courts he found people selling cattle sheep and doves and others sitting at tables exchanging money so he made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts both sheep and cattle he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables to those who sold doves he said get these out of here stop turning my father's house into a market his disciples remembered that it is written zeal for your house will consume me the jews then responded to him what sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this jesus answered them destroy this temple and i will raise it again in three days but the temple he had spoken of was his body after he was raised from the dead his disciples recalled what he had said then they believed the scripture and the words that jesus had spoken so that was our second sign jesus cleansing or clearing the temple but before we get there let's begin with the scenes the sad scenes from america this past week so much of the world has been gripped by the tragic death of george floyd as the ugly head of injustice and racism has raised itself once more leading to those protest movements that we have seen in various cities declaring the message that black lives the message that black lives matter and they matter of course because every life matters now as christians and as a church we believe and we insist on this reality that all people whoever we are are made in the image of god with value and dignity before him and we also very much hold on to the hope of the gospel that in jesus there is the hope of reconciliation first of all as jesus dies and rises there is hope for us of being reconciled to god that despite our sin that separates jesus has come to reconcile us to god as he takes our sin and he pays the punishment to bring us peace with god but not only does jesus bring reconciliation with god which is glorious he also brings peace with one another that all barriers are broken down when our faith is in jesus peace with one another that all barriers are broken down when our faith is in jesus but what we have seen in america and around the world is is lament sadness and fear in black communities and we've seen anger anger leading to action and to protest

of course some of that has crossed lines but there is protest against injustice and we'll pray about that after thinking about the bible together now two thousand years before these events we meet jesus in righteous anger taking action to confront the injustice that he sees and what is that injustice as jesus enters the the courts of the temple what is that god his father is being dishonored in his own house and that people are being denied the right to know and enjoy god that relationship we are made for being denied the right to worship so let's see how jesus acts and why and see why this matters to you and to me today so let's begin with the sign so we're given the setting in verse 13 and it's very different from last time last time the first sign of jesus was semi-public it happened at a wedding ceremony but only a few people jesus mother disciples servants saw the miracle revealing jesus glory where he turns water into wine by contrast here in verse 13 we're told it's almost time for the passover and it's happening in jerusalem so this is the biggest gathering in the biggest city in israel so think if we're in edinburgh right now think edinburgh during the fringe think of the busyness and how crushed it is and they're gathering for um the passover feast and festival a time when they remember with thankfulness god setting israel free from slavery to become his people so they might be in relationship with god they might worship and enjoy god and so jesus comes to the very center uh where the the worship and where the festival uh all takes place he comes to the temple but what is it he finds he finds people selling cattle sheep and doves and others sitting at tables exchanging money those temple courts where non-jews were able to come and worship god they've been filled with animals they've been filled with business so what's going on here what's going on is a convenience that was established for worshipers so and recognizing that some people came from different provinces and different countries rather than them bringing their own animals perhaps hundreds of miles to jerusalem instead people in jerusalem would provide clean animals ready for sacrifice and also people in different provinces would have different money so there was a currency exchange for different provinces so they could bring the appropriate money to the temple the problem is that this practice has moved from where it used to be on a mountainside now it's moved into the temple itself so jesus walks in and he's confronted by all this noise and all this buying and selling and it's a scandal to him and so in verse 16 he says get these things out of here stop turning my father's house into a market my father's house an implicit claim of identity that he is the son of god but what's happening you see the temple is being made impure what you think about all of those animals that is not going to be a clean space and there's going to be a whole lot of chaos going on

this is a situation that is now unfit for worship can you imagine all the distraction coming from the noise of all those animals and the buying and the selling and the exchanging of money and as well as that a barrier has now been set up so that if a non-jew had made the effort wanting to worship god to come to the temple there was that no entry sign because their place of worship has become a marketplace and jesus is angry righteously angry so what does he do in verse 15 he says he made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts sheep and cattle turning over the coins of the money changers scattering them over turning their tables so here he is in righteous anger in judgment of the temple system he fashions a whip and he sets him out violently clearing out animals and traders and money changers gk chesterton the english novelist who wrote a book called orthodoxy and he said that before he became a christian he said i was given the impression that that jesus was a gentle creature you know that maybe the stereotype that people have gentle jesus meek and mild but he said then i looked at the new testament and he realized how different jesus was to that stereotype and this sign certainly doesn't fit does it here is jesus righteously angered the disciples as they think about it they then later on reflect on a psalm psalm 69 in verse 17 we have it quoted his disciples remembered that it's written zeal for your house will consume me jesus is like david the king who is consumed with passion for god's glory and for god's house as he was seeing other people reject ignore mock and be guilty of injustice the king is concerned for the glory of god and the house of god now it's amazing when you think about it that the religious leaders in jesus day they don't see the problem they don't see the problem of turning a part of the temple into a market area and so they allow this to happen that they have created a system making the worship of god of knowing god either hard for some or impossible for others i don't know what you would think is the the noisiest environment that you've been in um in my head i can think of traveling through manila in the philippines in a in a jeepney with an open back and just hearing traffic noise and horns honking and eight lines of traffic and just being bedlam you know impossible to have a conversation impossible to think so put yourself here in the temple you know there's the there's the animals there's the cows mooing and the sheep bang and the doves cooing and there's people they're offering currency exchange how is anyone supposed to pray in that sort of context how is anyone supposed to come and offer a sacrifice in the right spirit to really honor god in that setting how is someone able to enjoy the high point of their religious life to meet with god to know and enjoy god and his forgiveness to be in knowing that access that reconciliation that relationship in this kind of madness and so jesus takes action so that god and god's house might have the honor they deserve so that pure worship might take place and so that anyone and everyone might be able to come and meet with god so this clearing of the temple is a sign

and so let's think for the rest of our time what does the sign signify so let's move to the significance so remember jesus has just begun his public ministry he is still very much an unknown at this stage so in verse 18 after jesus performs this act the jews respond to him what sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this now that sign has already been done jesus is a prophet who's come with god's authority and he's clearing the temple but they're saying what gives you the authority who are you what sign what badge what credential can you show us to prove that you represent god there is cynicism and there is doubt but jesus offers a sign a sign that comes in the future jesus answered them destroy this temple and i will raise it again in three days here is how you will know i have authority over temple worship when i die and when i rise three days later now the religious leaders they they totally miss it they think jesus is talking about the physical temple hang on a minute it took 46 years to build this you reckon you can destroy it and rebuild it in three days outrageous claim the disciples they only understand after the resurrection that jesus is speaking about his body that he is the true temple and they believe that jesus and his words after the event but let's think together about what it means when jesus says his body is the temple what is this sign telling us about the person and work of jesus and for our relationship with god three things to think about first of all and that jesus and not the temple uniquely displays the glory of god when john was introducing jesus in his gospel introduction in chapter 1 verse 14 he said this the word that's jesus the revelation of god the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only son who came from the father full of grace and truth the word became flesh and tabernacled among us before the temple permanent structure there was a tent called the tabernacle and john picks up this language and says jesus tabernacled among us jesus is the son of god who takes on flesh jesus represents the fulfillment of the temple and all that jesus says and all that jesus does reveals the glory of god to us so that no longer our worshipers are our worshipers to to sort of go to the temple and to admire it look at all this gold look at the size and the beauty of this building now look at jesus look at his wonderful character hear his words of truth his invitation of love look at his acts of mercy of demonstrating what his kingdom will be like look at how much he loves the world in that he gave his own life so that we might be forgiven and be reconciled to god jesus displays

the glory of god and here in jesus action and clearing the table how do we see at the temple how do we see god's glory we see the glory of god's desire that sinners might know and worship him we see the glory of god's grace extending a welcome and an invitation to unworthy sinful people like us we see the glory of god in jesus in his actions to remove the barriers that separate people from god here it was at the marketplace but then on the cross the barrier jesus would deal with would be our sin and god in his grace and his love has come to remove that barrier so that we can have access to that perfect love that perfect love that drives out fear that perfect love that gives us hope for now and eternity so jesus uniquely displays the glory of god secondly jesus and not the temple is now our center of worship the temple is one of those sort of dominant themes that that recurs all through the bible and we understand that from the very beginning god in his grace god in his loving kindness established a place where god and people could meet could enjoy fellowship that we can experience friendship that we can experience friendship with god because of god's kindness to us the garden of eden functions for adam and eve as a temple because there they are walking and talking with god they are in his presence they are enjoying his blessing in all that they see in all that they enjoy of course they sinned and that sense of fellowship was broken but then there was the sacrifice there was the promise that one would come who would crush the head of the serpent and that one would come from eve who would defeat the devil and the power of sin but there was also sacrifice within the garden to to cover them when they felt the shame of sin when they felt exposed in their nakedness god in his kindness by sacrifice covered them which becomes a really important theme in temple worship and then there's the tabernacle so after moses leads the people out of slavery in egypt brings them to mount sinai where they become the covenant people of god god commits to being their god and he calls them to be his people they're brought into this wonderful relationship and part of that they they get the law but they also get moses gets instructions for how to build a tabernacle a tent where god again in his mercy will dwell in the midst of his people so when israel was on the move in the wilderness and they were setting up camp god was quite literally his tent was right in the middle and the 12 tribes camped all around and there was very clear instructions for how it was to be built because god is holy but also that god wants to meet with his people the way was open but part of the way that was open for how that opening came was through sacrifice so there were detailed instructions and part of israel's

[20 : 26] life was worship and access by means of sacrifice and so both at the tabernacle and the temple they have this visual representation here is god with his people here is god seated on a throne and he is holy people are sinful but still there is a way to enter into god's presence if they bring a sacrifice and so the temple was hugely important to to national life and to religious life what is jesus's sign saying well just as the angels promised he has come to be emmanuel he has come to be god with us he has come to be the way that we meet with god think back to our memory verse at the beginning our call to worship i am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me worship is not rooted to a place or a building christianity does not center on a holy place no our faith centers on a holy person the son of god who became one of us to to be our savior to be our rescuer and so our worship is not tied to buildings and places and that's really good news for us and in lockdown that that god continues to meet with us that we can still know god through jesus that jesus sends the spirit so that he dwells in us so that we know that he's always with us wherever we are and now that that worship is centered on a person and not in a place it allows the message of christianity and it allows the church of jesus to go global so today there are hundreds of millions of people worshipping some at home some in house churches some in the open air some back in their church buildings but all of them enjoying the privilege of knowing god through faith in jesus and it's been wonderful to to recognize and to hear that the good news of jesus is not under lockdown or quarantine that there are people who are becoming christians through this crisis that people are being added to churches through this trauma that god continues to call people to himself the third thing to see is that jesus fulfills what the temple represents so jesus is how you and i see the glory of god we want to know what god is like we look and we see the glory of god in the face of jesus jesus is the only way you and i can know god and jesus is the only way sinners like us can experience the love and the joy and the fellowship of god through that sacrifice that he made in himself the barrier that you and i face as we said is our sin what does sin look like sin looks like ignoring our creator god in the world that he has made acting as if god is not there or god does not care sin is rejecting his offer of friendship saying no to the love that he offers through faith in jesus sin looks like treating our creator king shamefully by rejecting or rebelling against his law his commands and all of those sins and so many more they deserve eternal judgment we don't deserve to be near to god we deserve to be sent away from god and all his goodness forever and that's a serious problem

it's a barrier that you and i cannot clear by ourselves we cannot pay off that moral debt we cannot gain access by ourselves we simply do not have the capacity to be sinless and perfect as god demands so what we need is we need another clearing another cleansing from jesus and that will take place on the cross what is happening in the death of jesus and the resurrection of jesus well it's that jesus takes our sin your sin and mine on himself he comes as the lamb of god who takes away the sin of the world and in his death and by faith in jesus trusting that what jesus did on the cross he did for me the barrier of sin is removed our sin is washed away we are forgiven and now we can enjoy life with god we get a wonderful picture of what that looks like at the cross as jesus dies on mount calvary back in the temple in jerusalem as jesus dies as his body is being torn apart the curtain of the temple is torn in two from top to bottom that great no entry sign to god's most holy place in the temple but is torn down in the death of jesus the way of access is opened up for all who will believe in him so jesus second sign the clearing of the temple is a pointer to his great mission he has come to be the one who we worship he's come to reveal god to us god in the flesh so that we might worship through him and jesus is how we can know god because he takes our sin and he creates a way for us you and i we've been made in the image of god for relationship and so i'm sure we've been feeling the pain of lockdown in so many ways and maybe you've been feeling a sense of relief and hope with that easing we need to remember the greatest relationship of all that we are all made for is to know god to know god through jesus and so the invitation is to come to him have faith in him confess your sin to him trust in him as your lord and saviour believe in him and enjoy relationship with god today for the rest of your life and for all eternity you