

# The Father's House

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [ChristChurchEastBay.org](http://ChristChurchEastBay.org). Good morning, church family.

My name is Stevie. I'm part of the North Berkeley Community Group. This morning I'll be reading the scripture lesson. It's from the Gospel of John, chapter 2, verses 15 to 23.

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.

[ 1 : 13 ] 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.

They replied, It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you're going to raise it 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. Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

[ 2 : 23 ] This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ. Good morning, Christ Church.

And again, Happy New Year. New Year, new you, right? How many of you made New Year's resolutions this year? How many of you, your resolutions included the word Omicron?

So many disappointing disruptions right now, right? But thankfully, this appears to be mild. We think it's going to peak in the next week or so, and hopefully pass over pretty quickly.

And I'm grateful to have such a highly vaccinated and boosted church. We were 98% vaccinated back in May. If you're new with us, that's just maybe helpful information to have.

And our plan during this season is what it's been the whole time, which is just to keep calm and carry on. Remember when the NBA shut down and the pandemic became real.

[ 3 : 33 ] You guys remember the NBA shutting down? Well, I think the NBA is going to lead us out of the pandemic as well. The Omicron wave seems to have peaked in the league already. And if the NBA can find a way to keep playing, then surely the people of God can find a way to keep doing what we do.

Because I believe what we're doing is infinitely more important than what the NBA is doing. And with that, I want to say go Warriors. And actually, I think Steph Curry would agree with what I just said, which is really cool.

Maybe your New Year's resolution did not include the word Omicron, but what kind of change are we typically hoping for with these resolutions? Many of us want to exercise more, lose weight, get organized, learn a new skill or hobby, kick a bad habit, spend less, save more, invest more time in our family and our friends, maybe travel more, read more books.

What's interesting to me is that 50% of Americans set New Year's resolutions, but you know what happens a year later? 88% of those resolutions fail. That's 156 million failed resolutions.

Maybe you're here today and you resolve to lose five pounds. Nine days in, you've only got 10 pounds left to go, right? Change is hard. And if it were easy, everybody would do it.  
[ 5 : 00 ] We need support for whatever change we want to see in our lives. So if one of your desires is to grow closer to God in 2022, I want to say that you won't do that on your own.

That you need a church, this church or any other church, you need to form the habit of Sunday worship every week, get involved in a midweek community group, maybe come to our Christianity Explored, which starts this Wednesday night.

But if you want to see change in your life, research has shown us you can't do that strictly on your own. You need a strong community that's built for change.

And here in the church, we have the means of God's grace. We have the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We have 2,000 years of enablement for deep and lasting change.

You want to know what my New Year's resolution is for your life? It is to lead you into a deeper relationship with Christ and His church through community and for the city.

[ 6 : 06 ] As Andrew mentioned, that's our mission. That's our New Year's resolution for you in 2022. It's the reason we preach the Gospels every year from Christmas to Easter. It's the reason we create discussion questions for our community groups.

The reason we create a daily Bible reading plan through the Gospel of John. All of these are meant to help you have an encounter with Jesus Christ. Because there's no more powerful agent of change in the whole world than to have a relationship and a relationship that's getting deeper and deeper with Jesus.

If He rose from the dead, whatever change you want to see happen in your life is no problem for Him. But He wants to do it in the context of His community. And right now, everything's telling us to lean away from community.

And I'm inviting you to lean in to community. Unless you're sick. Stay home. Stay home. We're in the Gospel of John. We focused for a few weeks on John 1 leading up to Christmas.

And we started the New Year in John 2 last Sunday where Jesus changes the water to wine, changes shame to joy. Today we're looking at Jesus who cleanses and redefines the temple.

[ 7 : 19 ] And I think God's word for us today is that zealous Jesus makes bold claims about God, His body, and our hearts.

Zealous Jesus makes bold claims about God, His body, and our hearts. I want to start with this, that zealous Jesus makes bold claims about God.

Listen to verse 13. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the temple courts He found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

Some historical context, if you don't know the Bible very well, you can't be a Jew without the Torah and the temple. And in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, we learn about Israel's exodus from Egypt, the night of the Passover, the sacrificial lambs, the blood on the doorposts, the mercy of God, the angel of death passing over to save God's people.

And that yearly, there's a yearly celebration of that Torah event in the temple on Mount Zion. And Jesus, being a faithful Jew, He walks, you know, that five-day journey from Galilee to Jerusalem three to four times every year to celebrate the biblical feasts.

[ 8 : 36 ] And He gets to Passover, this one particular year at the beginning of His ministry, and tiny Jerusalem is full of people. Probably about two million-plus people are packed.

It's just crowded wall to wall. And what does Jesus do to start His ministry at Israel's ground zero amid massive crowds of pilgrims?

We read in verse 15, this is what He decided to do. 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.

Probably not the best way to win friends and influence people. Is this the Jesus that we introduce to our young kids? Maybe you had a picture of Jesus in your room or in your Bible as a child, and it was this idealized figure in a meadow with a lot of flowers, and He's holding a lamb, and little boys and girls are reaching out to Jesus.

It's probably a sentimentalized, anemic, passive figure. We teach our kids about gentle Jesus, meek and mild, healing Jesus, forgiving Jesus, feeding Jesus, teaching Jesus.

[ 9 : 51 ] But what about whipping Jesus, who's driving the animals? What about table-turning Jesus, who's scattering the coins? We love the Jesus of John 2, who turns water into wine and brings the joy of the feast.

But we're not so sure that we like this Jesus. The rest of John 2, that makes a whip of judgment. Now, the cords of this whip were the rushes that you would put under animals, and they were not strong at all.

They wouldn't have hurt the animals. It's just a little whip woven together out of straw. Jesus is not physically overpowering these animals, but what He is doing is spiritually overpowering the people with His zeal for God and His moral outrage.

Now, imagine what would happen if you did this. You waited till the biggest day in your office or your department. It's an open house. There's a year-end party, and you bust open the doors, and you start turning desks upside down and throwing papers all over the place.

And you say, with a really loud voice, you say, this whole place is a disgrace. It's corrupt from top to bottom. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

[ 11 : 02 ] This entire system is finished. What do we do with this Jesus? Well, you basically have two options. You can go the Thomas Jefferson route, and you can basically just cut this part and any other part out of your Bible that you don't like.

Or you can get comfortable with a Jesus that makes you uncomfortable. And I think that's why stories like this are in the Gospels. Listen to verse 16. To those who sold doves, He said, Get these out of here.

Stop turning my Father's house into a market. His disciples remember that it is written, Zeal for your house will consume me. Zeal. Zeal. What is zeal?

Zeal is energy. It's enthusiasm. It's passion and fire. It's intensity, fervency, and vigor. The antonym of zeal is apathy and indifference.

What this tells us is that the real Jesus of the Gospels is going to do things and say things over and over that rub you the wrong way and make you say, who do you think you are?

[ 12 : 10 ] Which is what they ask Him here. Jesus comes in and He says, This is not your market. This is my Father's house. Who has the audacity to call God my Father?

Not our Father, but my Father. Jesus is making a claim to a special, unique relationship with God as the eternal Son of God. And what is He so zealous for?

What is consuming Him and burning in Him and eating Him up? It's not so much the evils of the world. It's the fact that the people of God have lost their purity.

This is to be the house of my Father, but you turn it into a market. This is to be the place of worship, but what you filled it with is a bunch of noise and mess and distraction and business and banking and money and deals.

Now, don't get me wrong. Banking and business need to be done. Money needs to be changed. The animals here need to be purchased so they can be sacrificed. All of this is legitimate and essential.

[ 13 : 20 ] But the issue here is location, location, location. Jesus says, I want you to prepare for worship and I want you to do it in a different way, at a different time, in a different place. Why?

Because God deserves respect. And Jesus has come to restore honor to God. What's the first thing He teaches us to pray in the Lord's Prayer?

First line. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. And He puts that at the top line of the prayer because it's His highest concern.

It was precisely Jesus' passion for God's worship that led to Jesus' passion and death at human hands. That's why they arrested Him and put Him on trial. Jesus was so on fire for the majesty, the power, the holiness of God that He would get badly burned.

And that's what Jesus' cross tells us. It tells us that if you have zeal for God and for His house, it's gonna hurt you too. So what does this mean for us, Christchurch, as we start a new year?

[ 14 : 29 ] I just wanna ask some questions. How closely do we resemble Jesus' zeal about worshiping and honoring God? And would people recognize in us Jesus' consuming passion for the quality, authenticity, and purity of our relationships with God and our worship given to God?

I want you to think about this text from the prophet Malachi. This is Malachi chapter three, verse one. You've probably heard this if you've ever heard Handel's Messiah. It says this, Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple, but who can endure the day of His coming?

Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. And then the Lord will have people who will bring offerings in righteousness. If Jesus were to put us in our worship through His refiner's fire, what slag, what dross would be removed so that what remains is pure gold?

If Jesus were to cleanse us in our worship with His launderer's soap, soaking and beading and scrubbing and rinsing, what dirt, what stains would be removed so that what remains is pure fabric?

[16:00] If Jesus were to put together a whip to drive out the animals of distraction in our lives and to overturn the tables of lesser priorities in our lives that keep us from morning prayer and daily scripture and showing up prepared and on time week after week to Sunday worship, what would those distractions and lesser priorities be?

Malachi 3 says, then the Lord will have people who will bring offerings in righteousness. John 2 says that whatever is in our lives that needs to be burned up in the refiner's fire, whatever needs to be washed away by the launderer's soap, whatever is impure, whatever is unrighteous, whatever is insignificant and unimportant and not worthy of God, Jesus says to that thing that He's pointing at in my life and in your life, get rid of it.

Get it out of here. Get rid of everything that's keeping you away from my Father's house and get rid of everything that's not appropriate and fitting to bring into my Father's house.

You guys with me? You guys with me? Okay. The mask, I can't tell. The house of my Father is not a transactional market among equals.

The house of my Father is the place where the almighty, majestic, holy God wants little people like us to come and be at home with Him in personal, intimate relationships.

[17:37] The Father's house is a place where we enter into a familial covenant bond with Him by His Son and by His Spirit. It's the place where by the Spirit we come to share in the relationship that the Son has with His Father.

Wow. What a high privilege. And yet what a high responsibility for the people of God. You see, in John 2, we encounter the Lord of the wine and the Lord of the whip.

Both. We can't separate them. We have to have both together. In the sermon on the wine, we expect in a healthy church to find Jesus meeting the personal needs of ordinary people and quietly entering into their private crises and gently but powerfully moving individuals and families from shame to joy.

That's the turning of the water into wine. But the sermon on the whip tells us to expect a Jesus who will come and judge the public worship of the people of God and to raise up a people who are zealously passionate for the purity of the people of God.

So that's zealous Jesus. Add that to all of your other Jesuses. Zealous Jesus wants to make bold claims here about God, but also about his body.

[19:00] He wants to make bold claims about his body. It's a minor miracle that Jesus is not arrested on the spot. It's shocking that people put up with this behavior, this protest from this lone agitator, this unknown prophet from Galilee, but they do have questions.

And in verse 18, they say, what sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? Now, Thomas Jefferson, he did actually remove this part from verse 17 and following from his Bible because he didn't much like a divine authoritative Christ.

Because listen to Jesus' answer. How does he answer the question? He says in verse 19, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. That's a cataclysmic claim.

We modern people miss it because we don't really know what temples are, but ancient people knew that the temple was the place where heaven and earth, where the eternal and the temporal, where the supernatural and the natural intersect and meet together.

It's a cosmic crossroads crossroads, where the divine resides and where the divine presence is mediated and where the gap between us and the divine is bridged.

[20:23] If you go to Mount Zion today in Jerusalem, you'll see that it's, you'll see why it's one of the wonders of the ancient world. It's a building project. Some of us went a few years back.

It's a building project that lasted 46 years and it's just a remarkable architectural achievement. Massive retaining walls, 1,500 feet long, 150 feet high and some of these, some of the blocks are 40 feet wide, 500 tons apiece.

And it's this platform that creates 37 acres, basically 25 American football fields on the top of this platform. And when you get up on the top of this gigantic plaza, there are these large staircases that go up even higher into the court of the Gentiles and then the court of the Israelites.

And then you come to where the Passover lambs were placed on the altar of sacrifice and then you look beyond that to the temple itself covered in gold, towering another 150 feet high where only one priest can enter one time a day and where only the high priest can go into the very innermost part, the Holy of Holies, one time a year.

What's up with all this? What does all this mean? Why go to all the trouble? Well, the temple tells us that the ultimate transcendent mystery, the mystery behind all mysteries in this world, that gap between that mysterious power and us has been bridged and that all that's wrong with us can be made right here by the priests and the sacrificial lambs and all the prayers and the price that's being paid in this place.

[ 22 : 08 ] The temple is the place where you find the one thing in the whole world that you can't explain, the one thing that explains everything else. And what does Jesus claim about this place?

He says, I'm it. I am the temple. I'm the ultimate reality that you seek. Now, if you go back just a minute to the Old Testament, to 2 Chronicles 7, King Solomon builds this amazing temple and he dedicates it.

He prays this prayer and we're told when he prays, fire came down from heaven and the glory of the Lord filled the temple to a degree that the priests couldn't serve anymore.

The people, it says, they fell down with their faces on the ground and they worshiped and they cried out, the Lord is good. His love endures forever.

That's what the scriptures call the Shekinah glory of God. And that same glory, that divine presence of God had come down at Mount Sinai a long time before.

[ 23 : 14 ] It's basically an earthquake, a hurricane, and a volcano all in one and Moses had the audacity to say, Lord, show me the fullness of your glory. And what did God say to Moses?

He said, Moses, no way. You would die. You can't handle my glory. And here, the glory of God comes down to the temple and it sweeps people off of their feet and it casts them down on the ground and here, Jesus at the Passover says, that's me.

My body, my physical person houses the Shekinah glory of God. And the question for us is have we adequately understood Jesus' claim?

Colossians 2 verse 9 says, for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. And we've been looking over and over at John 1 14 where it says, the word became flesh and tabernacled or tempted among us and we have seen his glory, it says.

Now that's a huge claim in and of itself, but Jesus goes one step further here and he says, take this temple and destroy it and I will raise it up again in three days.

[ 24 : 32 ] This destroyed yet rebuilt temple is simple code from Jesus about his crucified yet resurrected body. And what he's saying is that every other temple you go to the priest, you bring the sacrifice, you pay the price, but in this new temple, I am the priest, I am the sacrificial lamb and I pay the full price.

Here is where the atoning work of God, the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God happens right here in me. Jesus is saying, I'm the God on the other side of the gap and I've come over on your side and when I die on the cross, I'm gonna put a bridge that's gonna bridge the infinite gap between you and God.

For I am the temple that all humanity has been looking for. I've come to fulfill the highest ideals of all the temples of this world and render them obsolete.

Has anybody else made such a claim? Any other religion made such a claim? Jesus, on this Passover, claims to be the temple, the house of the Father, but three Passovers from now, in the spring of 30 AD, on the night before his crucifixion, Jesus gives his disciples a new Passover. At that time when liberation and freedom and rescue from slavery are being celebrated, Jesus breaks bread and he pours out wine and he says, my body and my blood are the new Passover sacrifice for you.

[ 26 : 10 ] And friends, the crucified yet risen Jesus comes among us every time we gather in this place and he does the same thing. He says, the temple of my body was destroyed on the cross to free you from your sins.

The temple of my body was raised up on the third day to liberate you from death. You cannot bridge the gap without me. You cannot be the priest. You cannot pay the sacrifice.

You cannot give what it takes. You can't do it without me, so come put your trust in me. Seek the continuing presence of God in me.

Make your home here with me in my Father's house and that's what we're going to do in just a moment as we come to Jesus at his table. But I want to say one final thing because Jesus, zealous Jesus, makes a bold claim here about God.

He makes a really bold claim here about his body. But he goes one step further and he says, he makes a bold claim about us, about our hearts. Jesus came at a time, Passover, and to a place, the temple, that was so central in the life of Israel that what he did there had to reverberate through all of Israel, through the whole nation because the temple is the beating heart of Judaism.

[ 27 : 35 ] It's not just another church on the street corner. The temple is the center of worship and music, of politics and society, the center of national celebration and mourning.

And here this unknown prophet from Galilee comes and he shockingly turns everything upside down and he makes quite a stir. In fact, he impresses quite a number of people.

In today's terms, we would say that Jesus had many followers on Twitter and Instagram and TikTok. Somebody would have made a popular YouTube channel and started a podcast and he'd have had lots of likes and shares and views and Jesus goes viral in this moment and he becomes an influencer.

An influencer is, quote, someone who has large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views. Now, what does Jesus think about all these new enthusiastic followers?

How does he relate to them? How does Jesus leverage his mega-influencer status? Verse 23, now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name, but Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all people.

[ 28 : 56 ] He did not need human testimony about them for he knew what was in them. Jesus knows the difference between believers and believers.

Jesus makes a key distinction between two different types of belief, which seems to be the difference between belief that is shallow and belief that is deep.

Belief that is temporary and belief that is ongoing. Belief that is circumstantial and belief that is authentic. And the question here is, will the belief of these so-called believers stick?

Will it abide? Jesus is constantly begging this question. His first and greatest parable is the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils, where three soils received the seed of God, but they failed to bear fruit.

And only one of those four soils, who got the divine seed, took root and bore fruit. And in that parable that interprets all the rest of the parables, Jesus is saying, look, there's a belief that's shallow and temporary and circumstantial, and there's a belief that is deep and ongoing and authentic.

[ 30 : 14 ] And Jesus is deeply concerned here about untrustworthy types of believing. This belief is based upon things that are seen, not upon the Holy Spirit who is unseen.

Jesus is looking for a faith that he can believe in. Right? He doesn't believe in their belief in him. Why?

Because like it says in 1 Samuel 16 7, the Lord does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

So how can you know that you're a believer with the kind of belief that Jesus believes in? Well, say you invite a friend over to your apartment or to your house, and they walk in and they say, hey, you know what, let's move this couch from here to there, and let's put that table here, let's put that right over there.

And you say to yourself, hey, what sort of authority do you think you have? I'm the owner and you're the guest. But you see, that's the point of John 2.

[ 31 : 25 ] Jesus comes in and he starts moving all the furniture around. And he's telling people what to do as if he owns the place because he does. And Jesus, we're told, he knows the difference between someone who sees him merely as a guest of their life or as the actual owner of their life.

Between somebody who renders to him marginal authority and somebody who surrenders to him absolute authority. Somebody who says, Jesus, come on in and sit here as my guest.

Or Jesus, why don't you come on in and move my couch and rearrange my life in whatever way you see fit. That's the Jesus we have in John chapter 2.

And that's why over and over the scriptures tell us to examine ourselves. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13, 5, examine yourselves to see whether you are actually living in the faith.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are actually living in the faith. And that's probably not a bad way for us to start a new year, 2022.

[ 32 : 36 ] Do we have the kind of belief that Jesus believes in? That's the question for us today.

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