

John 2:13-25

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[0 : 0 0] Again, today's reading is from John chapter 2, verses 13 to 25. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the 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.

His disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house will consume me. So the Jews said to him, what sign do you show us for doing these things?

And Jesus answered them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, it's taken 46 years to build this temple.

[1 : 0 1] Will you raise it up in three days? But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore 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. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man. For he himself knew what was in man.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, let me pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray now that in the weakness of the morning, your word would be shown strong.

[2 : 1 8] I pray, Lord, that you would hide me behind your cross, that you would forgive me of my sins, that you would stand within me and speak through me, that our lives might be changed in the midst of your message.

In Christ's name I pray. Amen. Amen. Good morning. Good morning.

Good morning.

Good morning. this very system. And so we thought it would be good for you who live in the midst of the 21st century to consider what it was like for those attending services in the 1900s and were wondering why their elders weren't producing a more conducive environment to hear the word.

And so today you do have fans and you do have ice and metal containers in hopes of blowing some immediate swift and temporary cool breeze across your face. But of course I know that it won't work and to the best of our efforts is impossible of really cooling and that you're wondering how long I will speak. You're much like I was as a child driving across the desert in our early Chevy station wagon. Nine of us, seven children, no air conditioning. And I still remember to this day rolling all the windows down in hopes that the 103 degree air that would come running through us would cool us off. And then we all realized this is terrible. We cannot breathe. And we would roll all the windows up and for a moment think this is better. And then we would roll all the windows down. Now some of you have never rolled a window up or down, but this indeed is a blast, a blast from the past.

[5 : 15] Oh, for the removal of the old ways, a replacement with the new. Indeed, that's the way the text is going to go before us. If I was to attach a title to the text that was written and read, it would simply be under new management. And that's what I want to talk about today. I want to talk about what it is to be under new management, to have something old removed, something new replaced that you might live in remembrance of. But I'm getting ahead of myself. It would be good at the beginning to be reminded of some of the uniquenesses of the gospel that we are reading this summer, the gospel of John. John's gospel is distinct. He had what you might call some literary luxuries that were not afforded to the previous gospel writers. There are four gospels, if you're not familiar with the Bible. And John is distinct and different from the other three. Mark, of course, wrote without such literary luxuries. He wanted to be the first to get his word on Jesus out on the street, in the press. And he was first, but the consequence was his gospel moves with very little literary luxuries of theological reflection and richness of narrative discourse. It just moves to the point when you finish Mark, you're not sure that he is finished. And when he is finished, at chapter 16 and verse 8, you're not sure what to make of it. And so then there are Luke and there are Matthew who improve Mark. They don't improve him in the sense that he was deficient in what he said about Jesus, but they improve him in the sense of wanting to bring people to a fuller understanding. And all the while John has not yet written. He had the literary luxury of time. Time to bring a full and mature theological work on the person of Jesus. Indeed, we have already seen that, haven't we? We've seen it with this magisterial opening, this prologue that has just elevated itself through the centuries as something beyond the scope of one who's just writing quickly. In the beginning was the word. And that word then becomes flesh. And that flesh is made known through Jesus. And then he envelops that. He ensconces it, as it were, within these seven days of creation, all the way to the fullness of the first sign, the reading we had last week, so that by the time you finish chapter 2 and verse 12, your mind is already blown with the literary luxuries and the advantages of John. He's had time to fashion his work in ways that will move his readers. And today's no exception. You should know that all the other gospels also have a cleansing of the temple, but they place the cleansing of the temple at the end of Jesus' ministry, whereas John decides to dump that thing down at the very opening. And many people have asked, why? Does this mean there are two cleansings of the temple? We don't really know. We do know that John, though, is the artist.

And that John has seen fit to put before his reader in juxtaposition this cleansing of the temple scene, this under new management moment with the wedding at Cana. Interesting. The wedding at Cana was the very first of the signs. Perhaps this narrative comes right on the heels of his entrance into the last week of his life, which again would mean that John is pulling together the fullness of Jesus.

Interestingly, both in Galilee, where the outsiders were and where the promised Messiah was to come, and here in Jerusalem, the religious center of life, and again pulling all of Judaism with him, from a wedding, which was the perfect sign of messianic fulfillment, to the very re-establishing principle of the temple around his own body. And so I have come to think that John is here between verses 12 and 13, making a decision to wait on the entire ministry of Jesus until he has framed the conclusion of his opening. The first of signs. The wedding at Cana, done in a rural context, juxtapositioned to an urban context in Jerusalem. A sign at the first which was silent, and no one knew who had actually performed it. And a sign at the end which is of such public disturbance that everyone was engaged on it. A sign that at the very beginning was, it is not time for my glory to be made known, to a sign here on the temple that basically says,

I am in it, you are aware of it, come and get it. What a movement. And so if that's the case, when you open at verse 13, you are looking at the fullness of the literary prowess of a writer who knows how to put before you that Jesus is replacing all things. Whether they be the six of a priest, clay jars, clay jars, which would have been used to purify the people before a living God, or the very temple itself where mediation was made. He is replacing the means by which you and I come to know God. In other words, he is the one under whom all management, all authority, all power now falls. So take a look, verse 13 through 17, the opening identification and union with the text before us is there is the removal of an old way. And notice it takes place during Passover and in Jerusalem and in the temple. If you're not a reader of the scriptures yet, and I know many of you are coming along to read something like the Gospel of John for the first time, the Passover was the national opening couple of weeks of the Jewish year. They were commemorating by way of a national holy day, not a holiday, a seven week process where they celebrated God's deliverance from Egypt. And they were to set aside seven days where they didn't have bread, that is leavened bread. And they were to end it on the seventh day with a holy convocation that would give celebration to the way in which God has released us from bondage. It is in this day then that Jesus is moving and he's moving to Jerusalem. Now Jerusalem is a city that from the time of David forward in the Old Testament was the center of religious life for all of Judaism. It was the place to be. It was the anointed city from which God's kingdom would flow. And so here's Jesus in the week of the National Holy Day in the center of religious urban life and notice in the temple.

Now the temple, of course, if you don't know, signified God's presence with us. And not only his presence with us, the way in which he would speak to us, but his mediating power among us, the way in which we would relate to him. God's always had presence with his people. You could go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. You might almost think of the Garden of Eden as a fixed temple, the place where God was. But of course we lost the garden, therefore the need to be under new management until God returns in a fixed place. And where was that fixed place he returned? Mount Sinai, Mount Horeb. He comes down on a cloud. He now speaks to his newly redeemed people and he is with them.

[14:20] But of course he doesn't want them to live there forever. They need to move on from there. So he constructs among them a portable place, a tent, canvas for God who now resides in the box and is carried among his people. And this, this temple, as it were, on poles, walks through the world until David says, is it right that the living God would dwell in a tent? Would he not have a house for himself? And so David designs to build a house. Solomon's the one who carries it out and we are now in a temple. But remember this one is not that one because that one was torn down centuries before only to be rebuilt in a public and private enterprise in Herod's work with the Judaistic leaders, both civic and religious context, erecting what is Herod's temple, a massive temple. I've never been to the Holy Land. Some of you have, but I've seen it in pictures and it almost makes me feel as if I don't need to go.

It's massive, extended with walls that rise in a temple that's seated with courts and outer courts and inner courts from the horizon. It would have been noticed. This is where God dwells and in the Holy of Holies, where sacrifices are offered and the management of God with his people is carried forward. Here's Jesus, all by way of seeing change, moving from this quiet, undisturbed, rural, outdoor wedding to the center of life for any religious Jew in the first century, Herod's temple. And this is the moment of removal, 13 through 17. In the temple, he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeon and the money changers sitting there and making a whip of cords. He drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen and he poured out the coins of the money changers and he overturned their tables. And he told those who had sold the pigeons, take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of trade or almost literally from my Zechariah 14, a house of merchandise. There's a removal of the means by which we know God. This takeaway phrase in verse 16 comes with incredible strength. Take these things away. Take what things away? The oxen and the lambs.

And for the impoverished pigeons, which could be purchased, wherein on this national holy day, you would arrive with both a food offering and a sin offering. And what Jesus is saying is, all the means by which you are managed or live within the household of God, they are to be taken away, removed. This is not the way God is going to relate to you any longer. Take these things away. And that removal, I'm going to hold off on verse 17 for a moment because verse 17 is John's narrative point that we'll bring at the end. It's the same kind of point he will bring in verse 22. There's a remembrance John wants you to have, but the removal of gives way to a replacement with. Look at verse 18. So the Jews said to him, what sign do you show us for doing these things? Now you have to understand what it might've been like when you and I read this text today, we can't really imagine that Jesus would have been free even to walk around after turning over tables and pigeons. But in the time of Cestius, we understand that there were over 256,000 sacrificial lambs offered during this week period.

According to Josephus, there would have been times in Jerusalem when there were over 2 million people gathering for this great festivity. So Jesus overturning a couple of tables is not to be indicated as though the entire city sees it and stops. It would be like you going through a big, massive event. Place yourself at a musical concert. Place yourself at the Taste of Chicago. Place yourself in the midst of a context where there are millions, not thousands or tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands, millions of people. And there's a little skirmish off to one side that probably lasts about three or four minutes. And place their question within the same. This is not a sit down discussion in which they would have said to him, now that you have done this and we've put our tables back up. Let's have a moment of discourse. And on what sign or on what basis or on what authority do you think we're supposed to be mediated a relationship with God in a way different from our own? No, this would have been an immediate sign, an immediate conversation in which a lunatic fringe man on the street that you and I would have simply walked away from and gone on to buy our food at another tent. Would have been picking their tables up off the ground saying, hey, what are you doing?

What are you doing? What sign are you doing to think we're not supposed to relate to God in this way anymore? And the whole thing goes quickly. And Jesus says, destroy this temple. And in three days, I'll raise it up and they'll look at them and reposition their money and their pigeons and their means. And they'll say, give me a break. Took 46 years. In fact, we're still working on this thing.

[20 : 30] It's so unbelievable. Holy Trinity thinks they've got a reconstruction project down in Woodlawn with a building they just purchased. Herod's temple has been going on for 46 years. We've been at this for five decades. Give me a break. What makes you think you will build this up in three days? And it's over.

But in that line, the removal of things has given way to the replacement of things.

The removal of substitutionary animals has given way, in the words of Jesus, to his own person.

The significance for John is that you will no longer go to a building to worship God, but that you will worship God by arriving at his own body. That Jesus himself is the one to whom you go when you find your way into the kingdom under new management.

The removal of the replacement with, but in John's mind, he's been moving both in verse 17 and in verse 22 to remembrance for. Here's where John, the writer with literary prowess brings forth all analytical discourse and reflection. And he says in verse 17, when those things were removed, that his disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house will consume me. Or in verse 22, when he therefore 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. Removal of, replacement with, remembrance for. John is now saying the removal of these things is somehow connected in their mind later by way of reading to Psalm 69, in which they saw in Jesus's actions, one who fulfilled David's words, zeal for your house will consume me.

[23 : 01] Now this is kind of interesting. It might be worth, if you're not familiar with the record at all, turning back to Psalm 69, you find that in the middle of what we have in God's word. And Psalm 69 is what the disciples, and John in particular, have brought forward as being fulfilled by Jesus when he did the removal of.

In fact, in Psalm 69, it's in verse 9 that we read, This is written by David, says the prescript, is to the choir master according to lilies of David. And what's interesting about Psalm 69, the larger context, is it prefigures God's anointed one. It's the first person pronoun I, me, my, not we, us. It's not a psalm for Israel.

It's a psalm for Israel's king. It's a psalm for the one who would bring the kingdom in. And what he says in verse 1 is, Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in deep mire. There's no foothold. I have come into deep waters, and floods sweep over me. Indeed, he will return to this entire movement of water overwhelming him, almost in contrast to what happened to Israel at Passover when they walked through the Red Sea on dry land, and God delivered them.

What David is saying is, I am unlike Israel, whom you saved. I am one upon whom all the waters of your wrath are running.

[24 : 46] Indeed. When you look at verse 14, he says, Deliver me from sinking in the mire. Let me deliver from my enemies and from deep waters.

Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me. In fact, he goes on in the psalm, who actually says in verse 30 and 31, that David was believing that although he was, in a sense, dying, whereas Israel was to be relating with God, he says in verse 30, Nevertheless, I will praise the name of God with a song.

I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoof. And when the humble see it, they will be glad.

He picks up on the very images of the things in the cleansing of the temple that are being replaced. And he says, What's happening to me, may it be for the welfare of the people more than the means by which they presently relate to you, the sacrificial system, says David.

And so the disciples, much later, I assume, are reading the scriptures after the resurrection and before John himself has written this gospel.

[26 : 07] And in reading Psalm 69, they are remembering the moment of removal. and they're reading Psalm 69 and saying to themselves, Is this not, although written by David, a prophetic word which we saw revealed in Jesus?

That he himself has fallen under the hand of God in death. Yet may he not be put to shame, but may he bring life to those who would follow him.

Let me make it personal. Take these things away. Do not make your father's house a house of trade. Jesus has now associated himself with the temple and later in the scriptures, they will associate the church with the place where God lives.

And in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul will actually associate the individual as the temple of the Holy Spirit. That you, if you have confessed Christ, have the spirit of Christ and therefore are the temple of the Holy God.

You are the place in the world where God dwells. And therefore, there is a need for the ongoing removal of anything by which you think you are made right with God or you already know is in contrast to the things of God.

[27 : 53] I'll ask it to you as simple as possible. Under new management means going to work on your own interior life and collectively our life.

Now, I know you're all fascinated. We're all fascinated with the recent Marie Kondo's material on the tidying, the magic of, the tidying up magic of a cluttered life or something like that.

You know what it is. You've seen it. I haven't. But I get the principle. What she's saying is our lives are being held back by the accumulation of things in our home that are robbing us of productivity, sensitivity, and joy.

So she says, if it doesn't bring you joy, get it out. And so all of a sudden, all over the country, a whole people, Christian and not, have a host of things that need to be removed.

And you actually begin to feel better when you remove them. It's great.

[29 : 09] I love cleaning things out. The older I get, the less sentimental I become, the less sentimental I become, the fewer things I want hanging around, the fewer things I want hanging around.

I'm ready to pitch. If it's worth \$100, it doesn't matter to me. I would rather throw it out than live with it if no one will come and pick it up and pay for it. Now, that may be wrong.

You may say it's terrible stewardship. But that's just my disposition. My disposition is to rid myself. But what about the interior makeup of my own life? See, this is what also happens in Hyde Park.

Hyde Park is an interesting place. I've lived here over 22 years now. There's some homes you go into where you feel like, wow, they watch that TV show or they do that tidying up thing. They do one room at a time or one thing at a time and everything's clean and not too much in and you can actually walk down the hallway.

But in Hyde Park, there's some other places that are a little bit dysfunctional. You've been there. I've been there. You walk into a place and you go, oh my goodness. They moved here in 1938 and they have not taken a thing out and everything has come in and it is stacked up everywhere and you walk down the hallways like this because there's the accumulation of material.

[30 : 24] Well, guess what? Our lives are like that. What is in our life that just needs to be hauled out?

I remember when I finally shut down my grandmother's home in central Illinois, the home that my father grew up in, the only home they ever knew. I remember unscrewing the bolts on his metal frame bed that his own father, who I only knew when I was one, must have put together.

And I remember laying under there in the heat of the day, sweat from my face, undoing screws, thinking his father put this thing in and I'm taking it out. And I remember taking the mattress and we threw it out, at least tonight, and we had a big old bin and I remember throwing stuff out like a mattress that when you threw it out, you thought it was going to land and boom.

And when it landed, the thing went poof and completely disintegrated into nothing. It had been in the house too long. What's in your house, may I ask?

What's in your heart? What's in your mind? What are you dysfunctional about regarding your desire to retain that which is not under the management of Jesus?

[31 : 53] Think about it. What is it that when we walk into the interior makeup of your soul, if we were to point it out to one another, we say, oh, oh, hold on now, hold on now, that brings me joy.

That brings me joy. And according to the show, if it brings me joy, I've got to keep it in. What are the things that even bring you joy or the things that you go back to or the things that you're in love with, the things that you can't get rid of?

What are those things that you actually know are things that the Lord would look you in the eye and say, take these things away.

Do not make my house a house for trade. What are you trading in that needs to be removed?

Until the church cleanses itself, it will be very unfit, an unfit vessel for useful work.

[33 : 06] Want to be useful? Start throwing stuff away. Do some soul work. Quit holding on to it.

Quit keeping it in that room that you're just like, every once in a while, I like to go in there and look at that. Every once in a while, I just want to go sit with that. Every once in a while, I'm sure it's okay that if I live with that, remove them.

If you are under new management, there is an ongoing removal of things that you and I know rob us of a true knowledge that Jesus runs our house.

the replacement of. The replacement, therefore, in verse 22, is his own self.

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remember that he had said this, and they believe the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. this remembrance is a remembrance for belief, for faith, for trust, for falling back into the arms of Jesus alone.

[34 : 32] And notice what they began to learn here. As John is writing these decades later, he's actually making a link here. In the first half, they remember something concerning the word, but in verse 22, the remembrance is not only in regard to the word, but it's equated with a word that Jesus had spoken.

The word of Christ is the word of scriptures. The word of the scriptures is the word on Christ. And they began to attach their faith, their trust, in the word of God as they saw within it all things concerning Christ and the word of Christ who upheld in all things God's very word.

That's the faith that they had. Their trust began to go. So people began to trust in Jesus. That's what it says, but look at the flip side, very last verse. Just because they were beginning to believe, verse 23, or trust in his name, Jesus, verse 24, no, no, no.

He's not doing that. He's not going to trust you or me or anyone. He's not giving himself to us because he knows what's in us.

You need to give yourself to him and begin to follow him. He's much smarter than you're aware. So John's actually saying here in a very powerful way to be under new management is to remove the things, whatever they are, that you think either bring you to God or are permissible in your life with God.

[36 : 16] And all those things are to be replaced, verse 18 and following, with his own work, with his death, with his substitution, with his blood, not that building.

and you're to rest in it. You're to believe in it. For as many who will be called children of God.

our Heavenly Father, as we see these texts which are replacement texts, we come to recognize that the things that purify us from here just won't work.

And the things that we have grown accustomed to living with won't help. And therefore, we sacrifice usefulness.

Help us to be under new management by the power of your spirit. For we cannot do this in our own strength.

[37 : 51] In Jesus' name, Amen.