

Zeal for God's Glory

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[0 : 00] The first part of John chapter 2, we saw how Jesus turned the water into wine.

He did something that only God can do. He turned the water into wine instantly. And he showed that he was God, that he had supernatural power.

John moves straight on from that wedding in Cana, and he briefly stops in Capernaum, as it were, for a few days.

But then Jesus and his disciples went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. That was a great festival held once a year that commemorated the coming out of the Israelites from Egypt, their liberation from Egypt.

Jesus and his disciples, they go up there and they visit the temple, which would be very normal, very busy it would be, at Passover time.

[1 : 09] Now, what does he find there? What does he find there? He finds that the temple is full of people selling oxen and sheep and pigeons.

And the money changers were there. And it's like a market. It's like a market. A place of merchandise.

And Jesus isn't at all happy. Now, this would almost certainly have been the part of the temple called the Court of the Gentiles.

Because there was a wall around the actual temple building. A wall about this high. Three cubits, I think.

If I remember right. And on it, every now and again, there was a sign saying Gentiles who go past this point are asking to be killed.

[2 : 09] They couldn't go beyond that. Only Jews could go beyond that. And so the Court of the Gentiles was as far as the Gentiles could get.

And here it was a market. And a dishonest market at that. In Luke 19, Jesus said the temple has become a den of robbers.

Now, some of it was necessary, but it didn't happen in the temple, of course. Like tithes and offerings in the temple had to be paid in temple money.

And so folk coming from somewhere else, outside, well, anywhere really, they had to get the money changed into temple money.

And so the money changes were a necessary role. But it had become a dishonest role. Because they didn't use fair exchange rates.

[3 : 14] They kind of enriched themselves as they changed the money. And then there were the temple inspectors. These were probably Levites.

Who checked the animals. Animals had to be without spot and blemish. So you come along with your goat, which you bought, or you brought from home.

Maybe cost you, shall we say, two pounds. And you come to the temple. And the temple inspectors look at it. And they say, no, won't do. But you can get another one from Jacob over there.

And you go to Jacob over there, and he charges five pounds for this goat. So they were making money off the devotion of the ordinary people.

And turning God's house into a dishonest market. And Jesus was furious. As we read there, zeal for your house will consume me.

[4 : 27] It did that day. He overturns the tables, drives out the animals. And claiming the right to do so, as he said, is my father's house. It's my father's house.

Now he, Jesus was upset. Because what should you find in the temple? You should find worship, prayer, and brokenness before a holy God.

But here there was only noisy commerce and dishonesty. They'd forgotten what the temple was about. A place to make money. And Jesus was angry about it.

He was concerned about the worship of his father. And he made sure everybody else knew about that concern. And so should we be.

So should we be concerned about worship. When we come to worship, we come to the King of Kings. And the Lord of Lords. And our worship should be appropriate and sincere.

[5 : 36] If our worship is irreverent or superficial or cold or lifeless or sloppy or theologically inappropriate, we too will receive Jesus' censure.

Because we're coming to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We come before his presence in humility and in awe and in reverence.

Worship that detracts from the living God by concern for performance or self-display will not be acceptable to him either.

We are invited, we're commanded indeed, to come and worship him in spirit and in truth. In spirit and in appearance. At first of all, we're going to honor Jesus.

Henry Martin went as a missionary to the Muslim world in the 1800s. And he wrote in his diary, I could not endure existence if Jesus were not glorified.

[6 : 49] I could not endure existence if Jesus were not glorified. is that our desire is that our desire when we see people who who are not glorifying him do we desire that he should be glorified when Paul went to Athens preaching he saw that the people were very religious they were all worshipping lots of altars but they were all worshipping the wrong thing the city was full of idols and Paul was greatly distressed and pointed them to Jesus because they were worshipping the wrong thing now not many of our neighbours worship idols as statues we don't have too many I think in our homes in Livingston and West Lothian but idolatry is looking to something other than God to give us what only God can give turning our eyes from him from giving him the worship he deserves and he is due and looking to others looking at other things looking at other things to give you what only God can give and we too live in a land where the majority of our fellow citizens are serving idols pleasure money sex power and they are not worshipping our Jesus they are not worshipping our God they are missing man's chief end which is to glorify God and enjoy him forever does it matter to us?

John Stott wrote it is a serious question whether the church in the western world has become so encased in the cocoon of material self-indulgence that the honour of God's name among the nations has become a matter of indifference Jesus had a zeal for God but for his Father's glory the hymn writer wrote my gracious Lord I own the right to every service I can pay and call it my supreme delight to hear thy dictates and obey what is my being but for thee its sure support its noblest end thy ever smiling face to see and serve the cause of such a friend tis to my saviour I would live to him who for my ransom died nor could untainted Eden give such bliss as blossoms at his side tis to my saviour I would live for him for whom my ransom died may God give us that concern for God's glory a concern that our lives are lived for his glory well people were upset at what Jesus had done the traders the money changers and the religious leaders they said they came along and they said well what are you doing this for who gave you the right to do this what sign do you show us for doing these things now they said give us a sign give us a sign they they would have heard of what Jesus had done in Galilee they wanted a sign there and then to prove his authorities to give something sensational and Jesus' reply would have made no sense to them it was a mysterious reply he said destroy this temple they were in the temple big and solid and very impressive destroy this temple and in three days

I will raise it up now it took 46 years to build a temple and they said to him you're going to build it in three days impossible impossible they didn't understand what Jesus was saying John in verse 21 that we read together tells us he was speaking about the temple of his body he wasn't talking about the stone and timber structure that he was standing in he was saying destroy my body and in three days I will raise it up again we're reminded of how Paul in 1 Corinthians said do you not know your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who you have from God who is within you whom you have from God you're not your own so Jesus was talking about the temple of his body he was in fact prophesying his death and resurrection and later on his disciples understood his enemies didn't understand what he was talking about nor did his disciples at that time but later on they would understand what he was saying but his disciples were silenced because they thought well how can we destroy this temple what does he mean what does he mean his answer was enigmatic mysterious but there's more to it even than that you know here

Jesus was looking forward to the abolition of the temple itself which would be replaced by himself the tabernacle and the temple were the symbols of God's presence among his people it was there that God had promised to meet with his people it was there that they offered sacrifices for sins he promised they would forgive their sins but they were shadows of a better temple the actual temple of stone and wood would pass into oblivion not only would it be destroyed by the Romans in about 40 years time but it would become spiritually obsolete not needed the temple with all its sacrifices pointed forward to a perfect sacrifice and a better and final meeting between God and man with Jesus death the sacrifices were no longer needed no longer needed because he offered one sacrifice once for all for all sin sacrifices weren't needed the veil of the temple was torn in two the way to God was opened not only was the that dividing wall that kept the Gentiles out not only was it demolished but the veil was gone all

[14 : 43] Jew and Gentile alike had free access through Jesus Christ into to the throne of grace and to the pardon that God offers in him no more sacrifices no veil to keep us out Hebrews 10 19 therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh and since we have a great high priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith the invitation to approach God in prayer through Jesus

Christ Jesus had come you see to be that great mediator between God and man he was the final all sufficient sacrifice for sin there would be no need for a temple once he had died and there was no need in the vision of heaven in revelation 21 John could say I saw no temple in heaven for the Lord God almighty and the lamb are the temple of it there's no need you see for a temple in heaven because God is there and his presence fills every part of it and to be in heaven is to enter into the unlimited presence of God the full presence of God so Jesus was looking forward to his own death and the doing away indeed with the old temple and a new way to approach

God but the other important thing that we see in this passage is that Jesus knew men's hearts verse 23 now when he was in Jerusalem and at the Passover feast many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing but Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all about people and he needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was man now he was in Jerusalem he must have performed more miracles and he created a big sensation and many people were attracted to him and seemed to be believing in him but Jesus he wasn't swept away with his enthusiasm with his success he knew what was in man he he knew that these people praising him today would be calling for his crucifixion in a few days time or a few years time you know in the past 150 years scientists and medics have learned a lot about the physical makeup of man they can explain what's happening in our bodies and tell us why things happen and how to put them right if they're wrong through various surgery and through chemicals but they haven't been so successful in understanding what goes on in our brains that makes us feel and think and they can really only explain some of the physical processes again John

Stott to quote John Stott he said for all our knowledge we have experienced an even deeper sense of alienation human person who remains in many respects as great an enigma as it was to our primitive ancestors we just don't know what's going on in the brain but Jesus knew Jesus knows he knows what's in man and we see two things from this here first of all we are morally flawed we are morally flawed Jesus would not entrust himself to the crowd of apparent enthusiastic supporters he knew how fickle they were he knows the sinfulness of our hearts when he spoke to the people in Luke 11 verse 13 he said if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children you see you who are evil

Jesus knew that Jeremiah 17 9 says the heart is deceitful above all things desperately wicked who can know it Jesus was not deceived by a show of enthusiasm because we are morally flawed we need a change in our hearts he knows the actual sinfulness of our thoughts and actions there was an incident in Mark 2 verse 8 where Jesus had healed someone told someone their sins were forgiven and we read that immediately afterwards Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they were questioning within themselves those who were listening to him they were questioning saying how can he do this why does he do this and Jesus knew their thoughts he said why do you question these things in your hearts you see the psalmist could write not a word is on my tongue but you know it all together now this is a challenging truth isn't it every thought every word is known to

Jesus in the

[21 : 11] Christianity explored course we're asked to consider what it would be like to appear alone before the judgment seat of Christ and see all our life replayed before us the writers of the course have imagined a room with video screens all around it and every incident of our lives is put up on the screens including our thoughts which of us could hold our head up in front of such a display no one would be able to hold their head up on that day and Jesus knows everything about us we need an advocate we need our sins to be covered to be covered and prophets say the Lord had promised to cast all your sins into the depths of the sea never to be remembered against you anymore cast all your sins into the depths of the sea that's what

Jesus' death has made possible for us those who stand on that day in Christ in Christ will have nothing to fear because they're thrown away these sins they're not remembered against us anymore how can how can how can God forget don't believe that God can forget us God can forget anything yet he's promised to forget our sins not to remember them against us anymore isn't that a wonderful thought that's what we know when we know Jesus as our saviour so we're morally flawed but Jesus loves us we're sinful but Jesus loves us you know we're infinitely valuable to God but what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul what can a man give in exchange for his soul there is nothing more valuable than a man or woman made in the image of God and designed created for fellowship with

God created to shine like the stars in heaven created to live in the full in the full presence of God so valuable that the son of God left heaven's glory and came to die in our place to bring his lost sheep back into the fold this world will pass away but we will not heaven is our home if we know Jesus as our saviour we're the apple of God's eye we are morally flawed sinful but we are much loved and infinitely valuable the fact that we're loved as we are that Jesus that God doesn't demand us to make ourselves better before he will save us we can come to him as we are just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me we come just as we are because he loves us just as we are he changes us he changes us he makes us new he gives us a new heart but he loves us just as we are he gave his life to save us he speaks to us and says this is how much

I love you I died for you I died for you are you troubled by your sins is there someone here tonight and you're troubled by your sins you're not sure they're forgiven Jesus said I died for you I died for you my death is sufficient all sufficient for all who will come to me your sin though they reach up to heaven though they reach down to hell they're covered they're covered by Jesus blood so even though Jesus knows our hearts and he sees all the wrongs we have done yet he loves us and he calls us to himself so we have Jesus zeal for his father's glory an example for us that we might have zeal Jesus promise of a new temple fact that he knows our hearts but that he loves us still and he calls us to himself amen and may

God bless his word to all our hearts this evening let's pray father we do thank you for your word we do thank you lord that you've promised to speak through it and we pray that indeed your word tonight will mean something to us that will speak to our hearts whatever we need whether we need encouraging or challenging or convicting grant lord that your word might speak might speak to us and that we take it from this place to live and serve you and to be your witnesses in the week that lies ahead we thank you father now and commit your word to you bless it to our hearts we ask in Jesus name amen