

Trinity X

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. We read in our Gospel text of Luke chapter 19 how Jesus drove out the money changers from the temple.

Such action goes against the meek and mild version of the Jesus that is familiar to most people in our culture today. The outrage of our Lord here in our Gospel text is better understood when we consider the significance of the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

Jerusalem was seen as that heavenly city where God reigns. It was the place where God's reign would go out to the entire world as the people of God were to be light and to share the truth of God. And the temple was the place where God met human beings. The temple was not merely a functional building for worship.

It was adorned as a physical replica of the Garden of Eden. It was adorned with precious jewels and with gold that resembled the sun, moon, stars, and trees.

[1 : 24] It was the heavenly place where God would come and meet mankind. Human beings were banished from the Garden of Eden because of their rebellion against their creator.

But the temple was the place where God sought out his people, providing atonement for sin and reconciliation to himself.

The temple was the most holy place on earth because it was heaven on earth. That's what it was. The temple was the place where the angels were depicted around the throne of God.

It was the place where incense filled the air. It was the place where the psalms were chanted and where people offered their sacrifice, representing their allegiance to their God and to their creator. And the climax of this heavenly structure was the Holy of Holies that housed the Ark of the Covenant. And in this Ark contained the Ten Commandments, the tablets, Aaron's budding staff, and the manna from heaven.

[2 : 41] The temple, and especially in the Holy of Holies, was the tree of life for God's people. It anticipated the one who would come to be that final sacrifice for sin.

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He's the fulfillment of the Word given to Moses. He is the great high priest.

He is our good shepherd who offers his own life for us and who leads us. He is the bread of heaven that gives life to the world.

The temple was the Eden and paradise of God, where repentant people enjoyed God's protection and his provision, not only for their sin, covering their sin, but full communion with their creator.

And yet we read in our gospel text, our Lord is weeping over the city of Jerusalem. We hear of our Lord pronouncing the impending doom that was to come upon the people because they had hardened their hearts to God.

[4 : 03] Jerusalem would become a place of desolation. The temple would be destroyed. And the buying and selling in this most holy, in this most sacred place, depicted the depravity of a people reducing their faith to a mere commodity rather than something holy.

So our Lord begins cleaning house from these idolaters. And he does it with a righteous rage. He tells them, my house is a house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of thieves.

And such unbelief brought about the ultimate heartache and devastation. Jerusalem was ransacked. And the temple destroyed in AD 70.

God's people were once again without Eden, separated from God. And it was not cherubim and a fiery sword that blocked the tree of life.

It was now the Roman army. Eden was lost once again, and the people mourned. But God did not, nor does he ever abandon his people.

[5 : 30] The temple was no longer a structure in Jerusalem. It was now found in the same God, in the body of that same God, who wept over the wayward people and warned of the destruction of the temple.

It is found in the person of Jesus. Eden is found in Christ, and the church is now being built into a temple of God, offering, sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

The church is that new Jerusalem, which is being built by the work of the Holy Spirit. And we come not buying or selling or seeking to make a profit.

We come offering praise to our God and our King, taking heed to the lessons from the rebellious actions of our spiritual ancestors.

Folks, true Christianity is not about personal enrichment or fulfillment. It's about offering to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

[6 : 43] And it's not about the blood of bulls and goats for the atonement for sin. It's now about representing the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus and receiving the tree of life in that most holy communion, the Holy Eucharist.

That is why the Eucharist is at the heart of everything we do here. It's not about our personal religious experience.

It's not about our feelings towards God. It's about mirroring now, mirroring the life of Jesus by standing against greed and the rebellion directed at our neighbors and towards God himself.

It's about people being steeped in prayer and being practitioners of mercy as we have received mercy in Christ Jesus.

God is calling us this morning to take heed to the warnings of complacency and selfishness, putting ourselves as the center of the universe.

[7 : 58] He is calling us to flee from the impending doom where people use religion as a way of getting wealthy or seeking a certain social status or reinterpreting the ancient Christian faith to justify our own depravity and sin.

God is calling us to rise above the nihilistic tirades of a culture steeped in hate and vying for power. He is calling us to forsake the idolatry of materialism.

He is calling us to forsake the power and might of nationalism where we put all of our focus upon this country and the calling of God takes a back seat.

He is calling us to a life of love and a life of prayer where mercy tramples over violence and where the worship of God becomes our number one priority in our lives as we anticipate and look forward to the life that is to come.

God calls us to come out from among the wicked and to stay focused upon that city whose architect and builder is the one who has conquered death and the grave, the true temple of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[9 : 31] friends, we are called to be the temple of God, offering praise to him while seeking to serve others who are made in his image.

And this is our purpose in this life. It is our ultimate calling as we anticipate the Lord's coming for his bride in that glorious communion where Eden and the temple find its ultimate meaning and fulfillment in the eternal dwelling of God forever and ever, world without it.

So may we, like our Savior, may we love his church selflessly. May we seek to serve the church of the living God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And may we reverence and endure Christ not only with our mouths, by casting away the idols in our lives and by offering our lives as a living sacrifice in the worship and service of Christ, anticipating and serving him until he comes again.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.