

Destroy This Temple

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[0 : 01] Please open your Bibles this morning to the Gospel according to John. If you're just joining us for the first time, we're finishing up chapter 2 of the Gospel according to John this morning.

We're going to be walking, Lord willing, through this entire book over the coming weeks and months. And if you're using a few Bibles there in front of you, you can find this on page 834. If you didn't bring your own Bible with you, which we always encourage you to do, but we do provide Bibles for you.

And you can find this on page 834. We're going to be in chapter 2 this morning, and I will read from verse 12 through the end of the chapter through verse 25.

Follow along with me as I read. After this, he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

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.

[1 : 07] 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? Jesus answered them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

The Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple, and 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.

[2 : 14] 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 God's holy, inspired word, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

If you would, let's bow once more and let's pray. Father, again we desire to worship you in spirit and in truth.

We pray now as your word is preached. Father, would you move in power and store us, Father, again to worship you. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

What do you think is the number one most important thing to God? Last week we saw from the first half of John chapter 2 the story of Jesus at the wedding feast.

[3 : 14] He was changing water into wine. And we saw that Jesus alone has this unique ability, this unique power to transform. He has the power to transform the ages from the old to the new.

He has the power to transform material objects from water to wine. And we saw, of course, that Jesus has the unique power to transform us, you and me, to transform sorrow into joy.

We got this image of a very joyful Jesus last week. But we shouldn't misunderstand this to mean that joy in and of itself is the most important thing to God.

We shouldn't misunderstand this to mean that you and me in and of ourselves are the most important things to God. And we shouldn't misunderstand this to mean that our transformation is the most important thing to God.

In our passage today, this morning, we get to see a very different side of Jesus. A very serious side of Jesus.

[4 : 24] And in our passage today, I believe it helps us to see that the most important thing, the number one main concern of Jesus' heart is not joy in and of itself.

It's not you. It's not me. It's not our personal transformation. It is the glory of God. It is that God is worshipped as He deserves.

This, of course, is why we were created. This is the purpose of our lives. This is the point. This is the end goal of our transformation. And this is the foundation and the object of our joy.

The greatest priority of Jesus' heart is that God be glorified and worshipped. Jesus is zealous for the right worship of God.

As we read this account here this morning of what happened in Jerusalem, I want us to consider as we see what happens here at the Passover feast, do we share the same zeal as Jesus does for the glory of God?

[5 : 36] Do we share this same zeal? Is this the highest priority of our heart? This morning, we're going to see this zeal of Jesus Christ in two parts.

This is going to be our outline this morning. And if you're taking notes, I encourage you to do so. It helps us to follow along. Two parts here. We'll see that God desires worship that is God fixated and Christ located.

Two parts here. God desires worship that is God fixated and that is Christ located. First, we see true worship, the worship that God desires of us is God fixated worship.

We see this here in verses 13 through 17. Look there with me. We see in verse 12 that after the wedding in Cana, Jesus went down about 16 miles from Cana to Capernaum for a few days and then made the journey up, literally up, up the mountain to the capital city of Jerusalem to join the Jews from all over for the Passover celebration.

The Passover, of course, as you know, was a major celebration for the Jewish people. At the Passover, it looked backwards. It was reflecting, celebrating the great act of deliverance and redemption of the Jews from Egypt in the Exodus, this great act of redemption in the Old Testament.

[7 : 07] But also, we know, it looked ahead and was foreshadowing the great act of redemption in the New Testament, in the cross, the resurrection of Jesus.

God rescuing his people from slavery to sin through the death and resurrection of Christ. And you might imagine that just as his coming death and resurrection weighed heavily on Christ at the wedding feast, especially now, it must have been weighing heavily on him here at the Passover.

Jesus knew that in short time he would again return to Jerusalem to die. This was a major event on the Jewish calendar.

In fact, a whole month was set aside for preparation for this event. And that makes sense because history shows that Jerusalem at this time typically had about 30,000 citizens.

But during the week of Passover, over 2 million Jews and Gentiles from all over would gather in this little town of Jerusalem for worship.

[8 : 15] You can imagine just the sense of excitement and bubbling energy as this city was bursting with life and energy for seven days. Well, for some, this was also good opportunity for business.

They heard 2 million people. They heard Passover and they saw business. They saw dollar signs. 2 million people is a lot of business. And so they had two different operations running side by side.

We see for one, verse 14, look there. For one, it says that they sold animals, oxen and sheep and pigeons. So rather than going through the trouble of bringing their own animals with them to Jerusalem, worshipers could simply buy them there on site.

It was a matter of convenience. They offered animals for sacrifice there on site. But also on top of this, they knew that foreign currency would not be accepted in the temple.

And so they offered a money exchange service. Of course, with a little bump for the profit. They exchanged foreign coin for Jewish currency that would be accepted there in the temple.

[9 : 29] Now, this was normal business and it was a good service. This was not Jesus' issue at all. The issue here was not primarily what they were doing.

It was where they were doing it. Look there again to verse 14. What does it say? He says that these things took place in the temple.

Meaning not the temple building itself, but within the courts of the temple. There's a structure, the temple building, but outside were various courts meant for the gathering of worshipers.

And this occurrence was happening specifically on the outer court where Gentiles, God-fearing Gentiles, would gather and worship the Lord.

What's happening here is these Jewish businessmen are preventing and distracting from Gentile worship. I've been to several Christian conferences.

[10 : 31] Maybe you've been to some as well. And most of them, it is busy and it is loud. Thousands of people will come and gather at these events.

And as you approach the event, you hear the noises of laughter and reunions as friends gather and see each other. They're reunited. They reconnect. There's usually places for vendors.

There's different sponsors. Oftentimes people are selling merchandise, ball caps and t-shirts and hoodies. There's always a place to grab a good cup of coffee. But all of that is outside of the worship center.

Could you imagine if you came, how distracting it would be if this type of loud business and conversation and exchange and the grinding of coffee and the dropping of money and the selling of merchandise was happening inside the worship center?

While you were trying to worship. Could you imagine if you traveled for miles and miles and miles and miles, spent time and money and resources and energy to come and to worship only to be distracted by those who would use this time as an opportunity for personal gain?

[11 : 47] See, the issue that has Jesus so upset here in Jerusalem, it's not primarily that they're ripping people off, but that they are robbing the Gentiles of an opportunity to worship the Lord and thereby are robbing God of the glory.

He's due. So Jesus. Gentle, quiet, lowly, meek. Jesus comes politely asks them if it's not too much trouble, if they wouldn't mind picking up their stuff and going along if they don't have any issue with that.

No. In holy anger. He picks up some cords, binds them together and begins to chase these distractions out of the place of worship.

Can you imagine the chaos here of this scene? These businessmen are being driven out, chased away with the animals. Doves are flying in the air.

Sheep are running. Cattle are mooing, running away. Verse 15 says he pours out all the coins all over the tables. He turns the tables up on their side.

[13 : 07] And he says in verse 16, take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of trade. And the disciples remembered that it was written in Psalm 69.

Zeal for your house will consume me. Why? Because his father's house was meant to be a house of worship. Christ was zealous for the glory of God.

He was zealous for the right worship of God the Father. And any distraction has to be driven away. We have to understand here that God fixated worship is not just part of Jesus' mission.

This was his mission. The curse of sin that rules in our hearts, that reigns in the world, that draws us away from honoring the Lord, from loving the Lord, from worshiping the Lord as we were made to do.

Jesus has come to remove that curse, to destroy the effects of sin, to restore proper worship to God the Father, even at the price of his own blood.

[14 : 19] Anything that stands in the way has to be dealt with. You see, for Jesus, anything that would distract us from God-exalting worship must be driven away with zeal.

True worship must be God-fixated, must be God-centered, must be God-glorifying.

His glory must be central. Do we share this type of God-fixated zeal for the glory of God in worship?

We live in a culture where the focus of Christian worship here has shifted.

You may be aware. Instead of focusing on the glory of God, the focus has shifted and become about us.

[15 : 27] And when that happens, the distractions begin to gather and gather and gather. They multiply. Our assessment of a good worship service becomes whether we have had our needs met, whether we have had our preferences catered to, whether we have been entertained by what we like, whether what makes us feel good has happened when we come and when we go.

We focus instead on what we can gain. The songs become about us. The sermons become about us. Worship is not about us.

And to make it worse, we often make more of an effort to think and to talk and to complain about what we want, whether our needs are being met, than we ever do to go and to share the gospel with others that the nations might join in bringing honor and glory to the Lord alongside us.

Church, may this never be. I pray God would clear this out of my heart and out of his church.

Now, some of you may hear this and say, oof, that stings. One of my challenges in preaching the word of God is not just to preach the text, it's to preach the tone of the text.

[17 : 00] Last week was nice and joyful and light. This is serious. We need to feel the weight of intensity of how deeply Jesus feels about the worship of God.

that he be glorified and all distractions be removed. Do not rob God of his glory in worship.

So, let me tell you a few ways that we can help fight against this here. Just very practically, four applications, quick applications for us. Number one, place the word of God above preference and tradition.

Place the word of God above preference and tradition. We all have preferences. I got them. You got them. Some of us prefer some traditions.

Some of us prefer others. That's fine. But when these concerns rise above the word of God and what we insist must be done and must be a part of worship, must be a part of church life, then they become distractions rather than aids for worship.

[18 : 11] Number two, kill any ambition for personal gain when you gather here for worship. Kill any ambition for personal gain when you gather for worship.

I served at a church where shortly before I arrived, one of the deacons had to be removed from the church because he had, over time, taken advantage of several of the older members of the church, several of the older ladies who had generously, out of the kindness of their hearts, loaned him money, and he never paid back a dime.

Never intended to. He gathered week in, week out, came week in, week out, for manipulation and for personal gain under the guise of worship.

There's another man who showed a lot of interest in the church, wanted to ask me some questions, so he took me out for coffee to talk about the church. When we got there, all he wanted to talk about was money.

He said he just so happened to teach a class at churches to come and to get others to invest with him, and so he liked to go to churches and recruit others to invest their money with him, and so I told him he's welcome to come for worship.

[19 : 33] Glad to have him, but to be clear, have no expectation of teaching anytime soon, and I never heard from him. Never saw him again. You tell me, why was he there?

This time next year, don't be surprised if you turn on the television and you start to see politicians showing up at church services, even being given a microphone, permitted to speak, using worship, using the gospel as a platform for political gain.

Church, this is shameful behavior. I don't think it's a problem here at Seawee Bay right now, but we need to be aware that people use churches and worship as a means of personal gain all the time, and we all have that tendency in us.

We need to kill it in us and be watchful. Number three, approach worship with prayer and with seriousness. Approach worship with prayer and with seriousness.

You notice here that our practice every week is to begin our worship service with two things. It's a moment of silence, which is a time for you to quiet your heart, prepare yourself to worship, and then the very first thing that you hear.

[20 : 58] What is it? It's the word of God. Call you into worship. And then a prayer for our time in worship. We ask the Lord to move. We ask the gospel to be clear.

We ask that God would prepare us for worship. We intentionally try to bake this into our time together as a church when we gather. But are you personally preparing your heart before you come here?

Are you reading through the passage of Scripture, preparing yourself to hear the preaching of the word? Are you praying that God would prepare your heart personally for worship when you gather here?

Are you praying for your brothers and sisters in Christ, asking that they might be prepared? Are you praying for me, please? That God's word might be preached faithfully. Are you praying for others as they come, that they might hear and believe and come to faith in Christ?

Are you approaching this time with the reverence and the seriousness that it deserves?
Number four. Number four. Remember the mission.

[22 : 03] Remember the mission. You know, one of the main ways that we can protect against distraction is by keeping our eyes fixed on the mission.

It's not personal game. It's not personal affirmation. It's not a good time or it's just something to do on Sunday morning church. Our mission is to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we enjoy God. We equip the saints. As we evangelize the lost. The minute that we lose sight of that grand overarching mission, we will see this turn from a house of prayer and worship to a house of trade and distraction.

Jesus is zealous that our worship be God fixated. But not only that, we see in our second point, he knows that the only way for sinful men and women like me and you to come and truly worship the Lord is if we do so in him.

This is our second point this morning. Second, we see that true worship is Christ located. True worship is Christ located.

[23 : 26] Look there to verses 18 through 25. Verse 18 tells us that the Jews, assuming the ones who remained after just witnessing this chaotic event, they asked Jesus, what sign do you show us for doing these things?

In other words, who do you think you are? Who gives you the authority to come in here and do what you've just done? What authority do you have to come into this temple and do these things?

And Jesus, as he often does, he doesn't answer them directly, does he? He says, destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up.

You have to understand, both parts of that answer were completely ridiculous to the Jews. Destroy this temple?

This temple is sacred. This is God's dwelling place. This is where we go to worship. This is the central piece of our Jewish worship. Who would destroy this temple and raise it up in three days?

[24 : 35] You, by yourself? It's taken 46 years to build this temple and you would raise it up in just three days? Now, very briefly here, I want to just make note of this because there is a translation issue here and not really a translation issue, but a decision that has to be made.

And without going into the weeds, your Bible, if you look at it, it probably has a note there for an alternative understanding of the original text. And as anybody who's ever taken a language class knows, going from one language to another, it's not just, it's not always equal.

There's not always an equal comparison. So there has to be decisions that are made. There may be multiple ways to understand a phrase. This is one of those times. And so your note might say there, instead of, it has taken 46 years to build this temple, it might say something like, this temple was built 46 years ago.

I actually prefer that translation. Without going into the weeds, I'm about to go into the weeds. This temple was constructed under Herod the Great.

The work on the building itself, not the outer courts, the building itself was done from 20 or 19 B.C. to about 18 or 17 B.C.

[26 : 01] If we say that the temple was built 46 years ago, that would date this conversation here at the beginning of Jesus's ministry around A.D. 29 or 30, which would then help us date Jesus's crucifixion around A.D. 33.

I think what they're saying is, this temple was built 46 years ago. It's standing strong, serving us well.

It's the centerpiece of all of our worship activity. And you think you can destroy it and build it back up in three days. But as John tells us, they've completely missed the point.

Just right over their heads. Jesus wasn't talking about this physical temple at all. They were so fixed on this physical location for worship.

It was so central to their religious life, so central to their experience of worshiping God that they completely miss what Jesus is saying. Jesus isn't talking about the physical temple.

[27 : 06] John tells us he was speaking about the temple of his body. Don't miss the astounding statement that Jesus has just made.

For one thing, here in the Gospel of John, this is the first time that we see Jesus predict, foretell, predict his death and his resurrection. The cross was not some tragic accident.

It was not a mistake. It was the plan of God from the very beginning of time that the Son of God would come, would become man, would live in the place of sinners, would die in the place of sinners, would rise on behalf of sinners.

Why? Why would Jesus do this? To secure the eternal worship of the church for the glory of God for the rest of eternity.

That sinful man, sinful woman like me and you might rejoice and praise God for the glory of his grace in him, in Christ, in the Gospel.

[28 : 25] He came that sinners like us can come to him in faith and worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Do you see what he's claiming about himself here?

Jesus is claiming that he has come to be the ultimate, final, true centerpiece of true and lasting worship.

He is claiming to be the fulfillment of the temple. What a revelation that must have been for the disciples when they looked back on his resurrection and remembered what he said, destroy this temple and I will raise it up.

And what a comfort for those who were once dependent on this one location for worship, this physical temple, to know that true and God-acceptable worship was now offered in Christ.

Now this temple can never be taken away. Some of you probably know in A.D. 70 that this physical temple was eventually destroyed.

[29 : 42] In A.D. 70 the Romans came in, they destroyed the temple completely, not a stone was left on top of another just as Jesus predicted and it was not rebuilt in three days.

It has not since been rebuilt. Could you imagine the sense of religious disorientation that the Jews there must have felt with no temple, no place to go worship, to have the very heart, the very location of their worship just destroyed?

Well, the Gospel of John, it was written, I believe, sometime after this destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. And I believe that John is addressing some of that disorientation in his readers as if to tell them that true worship is no longer offered in a physical temple.

True worship is offered to God in Christ. Christ is the temple. If you're wondering where to go for worship, wherever Christ is, you may worship the Lord.

If you're wondering where the presence of God dwells, it's in Him. In Him, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. The fullness of deity dwells dwells in full in Christ.

[31 : 00] If you're wondering where sacrifice is offered, Christ Jesus is the sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. If you're wondering who will offer it on your behalf, Christ Jesus, He is the great High Priest.

If you're wondering where sinful man can worship a holy God, it's not a physical place, church. It's a person. His name is Jesus.

He has come and tabernacled among us. They destroyed the temple of His body, but on the third day, He rose, never to be destroyed again.

Some, I know, Christians are looking and waiting and longing for a physical temple to be rebuilt, to be constructed again.

They believe this to be a sign of the end of the age. I think if we understand what Jesus is saying here, then we would understand that the true temple was established forever at the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[32 : 13] Jesus says this temple, this building, was just a pointer. Something greater than the temple has come. If you want to truly worship God, you must come to Him in me.

And when you do, church, something incredible happens. Christ comes to dwell in you. Believers aren't just waiting for a temple to be built.

If we are in Christ, then we are also a fulfillment of the temple. The spirit of the living God dwells in you.

This building is a blessing. It's wonderful. We gather here. It serves us well. We love our physical building, but it's not the temple.

And it's not the church. The spirit of God does not dwell here in this place, in these four walls. If this building were to burn to the ground tomorrow, we would grieve the loss of this place.

[33 : 29] But you know what? Next Sunday, Siwe Bay would gather. The church would gather for worship. Maybe on the lawn, maybe in a home.

The location doesn't matter. Christ is in you. And where Christ is, there may God be worshipped.

Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 2, So then you, church, are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Jesus is telling us, if you would worship God, come to me, come to Christ, believe in his name and magnify the glory of God.

Once again, just as he did at the end of the wedding account, John tells us the effect of these things on the disciples and on others around Jesus.

[35 : 02] Verses 22 through 25 serve as a sort of bridge between this account and what will Lord willing see next week. Verse 22 tells us, when therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture in the word that Jesus had spoken.

And not only them, verse 23 tells us, many in Jerusalem there believed in his name when they saw what was happening there at the Passover. But, here's where we'll close.

There is a difference in their believing, isn't there? Look there at verse 23. Many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing, but Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them.

Why? Why? Because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in man.

Here is Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, the light of the world coming, manifesting his glory, proving himself, bearing witness by his words and his works that he might be believed and God might be worshipped.

[36 : 27] And as he does, some see and believe genuinely, truly, and yet others believe superficially.

How do we know? Because Jesus himself did not entrust himself to them. All that the Father gives me will come to me, whoever comes to me, I will never cast out, Jesus says in John chapter 6, that is, all that the Father gives to me will come to me in genuine faith, genuine trust, genuine worship, and I will entrust myself to them in full.

I will never cast them out, but those who come believing he can work signs and wonders, believing he's influential, believing that he is powerful, believing he's worth listening to, believing he may do something for them.

but they do not believe as ones who love and trust and worship Jesus from the heart, he will not entrust himself to you.

Jesus knows the difference. You can't slip it past him. He needs no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knows what is in man.

[37 : 57] Which one are we? Which one are you? Two chapters into the gospel of John, having seen what we've seen, heard what we've heard, do we believe in his name?

Truly, genuinely, genuinely, if we do, church, let's lay aside any selfish desire and worship him as he deserves.

Let's pray. Father God, you are worthy of our worship. We worship you because you are good for who you are, for what you've done.

We praise you for the gospel. We praise you for sending Christ to live and to die and to rise, for undeserving sinners like us. We pray, God, that you would move us to worship you in spirit and truth.

We love you. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Okay?