

Lent3B March 8, 2015  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN  
Roberta Meyer

Exodus 20:1-17  
Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 1:18-25  
John 2:13-22

### **Fasten Your Seat Belts**

Stories like this that just don't fit with the image of the sweet gentle Jesus of my childhood. This is no meek and mild, gentle Jesus we are seeing this morning. It sure doesn't seem very "Christ-like" to me. Jesus is really mad here. He's yelling and turning over the tables. He even made a whip! He is pretty much creating chaos in the temple.

In order to understand what's going on here, let's compare this story in the book of John with the other Gospels. First of all, where John puts this story in the narration of Jesus life in a different place. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke this story is at the end of Jesus' ministry, before his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. John places this story at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, right after he changed the water into wine at the wedding party at Cana.

So who's telling the truth? According to commentator David Lose it is important to remember "that the Gospels are confessions of faith from the first century rather than historical accounts of the twenty-first century. So each difference provides us with a clue to the distinct confession of faith the particular evangelist offers."<sup>1</sup> John chooses this story to announce the beginning of a new era. Away with the sacrifices. They are no longer necessary to get in God's good graces. Now all people will be able to receive God's Love through Jesus, the Messiah.

And there is something else. The words Jesus speaks is different in John than in the other three Gospels. "Rather than accuse them of turning the Temple into a "den of robbers" – accusing them, that is, of defrauding the poor – Jesus instead says they have turned the Temple into a "market place."<sup>2</sup>

You see, at that time the Temple really needed to be a market place or at least have a market place – so devout Jews could buy the animals they needed for sacrifice. And it was also necessary to provide a place to change the Imperial coin for the local currency so they could pay for their purchases. So in this account from John, when Jesus drives the animals out of the Temple, overturns the tables of the moneychangers, and demands the end of buying and selling, he is really telling everyone there is a new way to be close to God. This sacrifice stuff is over! And he did this with fury to leave no room for doubt.

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<sup>1</sup> Lose, David <http://www.davidlose.net/2015/03/lent-3-b-igniting-centrifugal-force/>

<sup>2</sup> Lose, David

Jesus is shouting, “Now you will find God’s mercy in Christ outside rather than inside the Temple. The Temple is no longer the only place to be in God’s presence. When we read chapter 1, verse 17, we see that John wants us to know that Jesus came so we can experience “*God’s grace and truth through Jesus Christ.*”

We get this about the sacrifices and all those gory details, good riddance, but I think sometimes we do forget that church is not a destination. Church is us wherever we are. And Jesus, we read in this scripture is announcing that unlike a building made of brick and mortar, the real temple of God, is Jesus’ body, and that will never be destroyed.

Sometimes it seems we think of church as a place we go to receive something. But maybe we have this kind of turned around. I’m not saying worshipping God here in this building isn’t important, even necessary. What I am saying is rather than it being a place to come get something, church is a place to come to be sent out into our worlds in order to meet and partner with God in our everyday lives.

Why all the emotion? Why the anger? Why the whip? Well, turning things around is hard. That’s what Jesus came to show us. And he doesn’t tiptoe around in any meek and mild way getting his job done. In fact it took Jesus’ body and blood on the cross. So what’s this mean for us? The Jesus we follow is no wus. And he promises to be with us all the time. This gives us a confidence and strength that isn’t available to those without faith.

That’s what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians. “*Christ is God’s ultimate miracle and wisdom all wrapped up in one. Human wisdom is so tinny, so impotent, next to the seeming absurdity of God. Human strength can’t begin to compete with God’s “weakness.”*<sup>3</sup>

We come to church to be reminded of this. Or that is what should happen. We come to be fed the power of Jesus in Holy Communion and in joining together in prayer and worship. But do we, the church, drop the ball here? We make a big deal about how we “serve the church” by pointing out service done “inside these walls.” Think about it. We install and pray for our council members and the leaders of Grace and Peace. We applaud and thank those who lead VBS, do special programs like our Black History program a couple weeks ago.

We write thank you notes to those who help with the Mission of Grace, to the workers at the Fall Festival. But do we install or dedicate those who go out every week to be accountants, or factory workers, or teachers, or nurses or parents?—Do we applaud the work done every day out in the trenches by each of us in our daily lives? That is where we meet and join God’s work every day. Shouldn’t every Sunday be a consecration day for all of us, commissioning us to be sent out using our hands to do God’s work?

Coming to church on Sunday should be like riding the Tilt a Whirl at an amusement park. You know, that ride that spins you so fast that if there wasn’t a safety belt the centrifugal force would send you flying. That’s what we should be doing here.

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<sup>3</sup> The Message Bible

See this big heart? This represents God's love for us. This is our safety belt. You were each given a blank label this morning. I invite you to write your name and your job this week on this label. Bring it up as you come to the Lord's Supper and place it in the heart. Where are you going to meet God this week? It could be in your work place or at home. It could be being a neighbor or a friend. As we pray this morning we are going to consecrate our service in our ordinary daily places so we will look for, and meet up with the God we have heard about in John's Gospel this morning.

Let's fly out with that centrifugal force! Will tables turn over? Who knows? What we do know is we are fueled with God's strength through Jesus. And Jesus is no wus. So fasten your seat belts and get ready to be sent to be God's church dedicated and commissioned with the God's unlimited power. Amen