

Chan Willis – F.P.C.-L.C./Welsh  
March 4, 2018

### **“Temple Tantrum”**

1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

As you and I consider what it means to be a “Christian”... a disciple, follower, friend of ‘God made flesh’ in Jesus Christ... we must consider just WHO He is to us. Why did the Son of God come to earth, and what does that mean to you and me... *particularly* as we approach that most sacred season of Easter? If someone were to ask us... God forbid... just WHY we think it is important that God came to earth in human form (and the ‘HOW’ it happened is WAY beyond our ‘pay grade’)... **what would we say?** We would likely stammer something about being forgiven of our sins, of God’s love for a wayward people... or *maybe* mention eternal life, or ‘turn or burn’ (just kidding... after all, we ARE Presbyterians... ☺). But aside from the most fundamental reason expressed later in this same book of John... That *‘God indeed so loved the world that he gave us His Son so that whomever would believe in Him would NOT die in their sinful flesh, but live forever with God in heaven’ ... what was Christ’s purpose?*

I believe that today’s passages gives us some insights into an answer to this question. **To challenge the old ways that the people were stuck in.** To provide an alternative to the ways of living that were NOT working. To take conventional practices and beliefs and shed new light on them. In short, to **SHAKE US UP!** That when Jesus went into the ‘marketplace’ known as His ‘Father’s house,’ He was not merely turning over tables... but rather, turning upside down the world of those ancient believers. That there was so much more to the message that Jesus was trying to convey than a mere **‘Temple Tantrum.’**

(You like that one? ‘Punny,’ EH? Well, I must confess, it is NOT original...]

I had first come up with a title like “Jesus is IN the house,” but when I mentioned His actions in this well known passage to Joey in our worship planning session, he just blurted out, ‘Oh, you mean like a *‘Temple Tantrum.’* Sometimes the boy just makes me PROUD!)

Now, you may have some trouble with using this word ‘tantrum’ with Jesus. The word “tantrum” simply means “an uncontrolled outburst of anger and frustration, typically in a young child.” Jesus, of course, was no ‘young child.’ And I do not think Jesus was ‘out of control.’

BUT, he may have wanted those stiff, critical Jewish religious leaders to THINK he was. ☺ But I don't think there would be much question that He was '**angry**' and '**frustrated**.'

WHY? Were there some random traveling farm animals that had just set up shop in the temple courtyards? Did the Jerusalem Bank & Trust just open up a branch there? NO. This had become common practice that in order to accommodate traveling faithful Jews who would not have been able to bring animals to sacrifice to God with them to the Holy City to be able to purchase them there. A very common method of showing one's penitence and respect to God. It would probably not be TOO unlike putting an ATM machine in the front entrance to the church to facilitate giving if you had forgotten your wallet or checkbook. Hmm... George/Mary?

I think that for one, Jesus wanted to replace some old 'stinkin' thinkin' about the **purpose** of going to the place of worship known as the temple. It was NOT simply to bring one's physical, financial offering to God, and think that was enough. Not merely a place you go out of **obligation**. You remember the Scripture verse that came to mind when they witnessed Jesus' 'tantrum?'

***"Zeal for your house shall consume me."*** (Psalm 69:9) How many of us would describe our desire to go to 'temple'... our 'church'... as '**zealous?**' As a desire that 'consumes' you? (I know... you just can't WAIT to get to church in the morning, right? ☺) Regardless, this intense tirade that Jesus went on is SO significant in the Scriptures that it is included in ALL four Gospels. Though, since this account in John is the only one to take place so early in Christ's ministry, unlike the other 3 which take place much later, it is believed by some that this was TWO separate incidents. And you wonder why Jesus wasn't too popular with the 'religious establishment?'

And as to the **reasons** we are to go to worship... aside from being 'zealous'... those other three references give some insight. Many of you may recall the way Jesus expresses his anger in those other passages: ***"My house shall be a house of prayer. But you have made it... a den of robbers/thieves."*** (Mt. 21, Mk. 11, Lk. 19) And that is *precisely* why our time of **prayer** in worship is SO invaluable. There is NOTHING that draws us together moreso than when we lift

up one another in prayer. That what we practice IN HERE... is intended to prepare us to practice OUT THERE! 'Out there' where 'thieves' are lying in wait to 'rob' your joy...

But it was NOT Jesus' intention to only shake up the people's complacency in their attitude toward the **practice** of worship... but also, the **place** of worship. When the temple officials questioned just how he could be so brash as to challenge their tried and true philosophy of church management... *because we've always done it that way...* he came back with an equally-challenging reply: **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** (John 2:19)

Now, even if we didn't have some help from the upcoming verse, with our 'historical perspective' we KNOW that **"he was speaking of the temple of his body."** (John 2:21) That while the physical building of a 'temple' can be readily destroyed, the spiritual building of the 'temple' of Jesus Christ can NEVER be destroyed. This should remind us what I HOPE we already know... we don't worship a **building!** That we must not put our faith in man-made structures... but only in 'God-made' ones. In Christ alone do we trust, worship, and serve...

So we see how Jesus, in the eyes of the Jewish clerics, completely disrupted the customary mechanisms for celebrating the high holy day of Passover. Their demands for a **sign** called into question Jesus' **authority**. Paul also wrote of how the **"Jews demand signs... and Greeks desire wisdom"**... both in order to question Jesus' authority. If he were the great King of the Jews, the promised Messiah, surely he could muster up **signs** of his power... and evidence of His **wisdom**. Both 'customary mechanisms' for demonstrating the true identity of an earthly KING.

But instead, Jesus chooses to remain quiet before his captors... appearing to be foolish and weak. Jesus endures torture and execution... hung on a cross like a powerless common criminal. THIS is the one they call 'KING?' Sounds more like a 'clown prince'...

So why would God choose such a demeaning, humiliating, seemingly WEAK way to show Christ's ultimate power over death? Perhaps because God wanted his precious children... US... to know the **extent** he would go to **prove** His love for us. Perhaps God wanted us to know that no matter how deep and wide our troubles, our suffering, our sorrow might be, that we have a Savior whose **suffering** was even greater... and whose **love** for us was even 'deeper and wider.'

That contrary to the opinion that 'religion is a crutch for the weak minded,' I MUCH prefer another statement: *"Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light."* (Helen Keller) Interesting, isn't it, that such an powerful statement about 'faith' and 'light' would be written by a person who was *blind*...well, at least physically... The crucified Christ... in all His apparent weakness... IS that strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into God's wonderful light. For ***"God's weakness is stronger than human strength."*** (1 Corinthians 1:25)

And so, as we consider just how we might answer what the purpose of Christ's coming was, perhaps it's as simple as giving our OWN lives a greater sense of **purpose**. That just as Jesus challenged those who were complacent, stagnant in their practice of faith, so too should we challenge others. (and **ourselves!**) Let us encourage others to be more 'zealous' in their life of worship, and of prayer. How do we, in our personal practice of faith, bear witness to ***"Christ crucified"***... demonstrating ***"the power of God and the wisdom of God."***? May you and I, when we encounter those for whom worship of Christ, in the church body or in His own, is unimportant, may we have the zeal, the power, the wisdom to engage in our own little **"Temple Tantrum"**...