

**When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup> So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”**

<sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

<sup>18</sup> Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

<sup>20</sup> The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” <sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. (NIV 84)

Theme: Respect for the house of the Lord

We love convenience. We enjoy getting things we want when we want them. If want to eat something, all we have to do is pull in to the nearest drive-through and we’ll have a meal in less than five minutes. We can hop on a plane to almost any destination in the world. If you haven’t talked to a loved one for a while you can call them up on your cell phone, or skype with them so that you can see their face! We live in a world of conveniences.

The Israelites were no different. The law of Moses had certain rules set up for the worship of the one true God. The law required every Jewish male to travel to Jerusalem to worship the Lord during the three major festivals each year—Passover was one of them. The law also required that certain animals be offered as Sacrifices to the Lord—cattle, goats, sheep; or if you couldn’t afford a large animal, you could sacrifice a dove or some other bird. Also each Jew over 20 was required to pay a temple tax that was due before the Passover.

Now if you traveled by foot or donkey hundreds or thousands of miles, coming from distant countries like many of the Jews did you probably aren’t going to be traveling with the animals you were going to sacrifice. It would be much more convenient to buy the animal when you got to Jerusalem—even better yet, at the temple itself. And if you came from a foreign country, you probably didn’t have the right kind of currency to pay for the animals or the temple tax. How convenient would it be to have money changers right there at the temple! So that’s exactly what happened.

Not long before Jesus made his trip to Jerusalem for the Passover he turned water into wine in Cana—his first miracle. It was toward the beginning of Jesus ministry. And when Jesus got to the temple he was appalled. There in the courtyard of the temple, the place where Gentiles were allowed to go to worship and pray to the Lord, people were everywhere. There were pens of cattle and sheep. Money changers had their tables set up. Just imagine all the noise and chaos going on. People were bartering back and forth, the noise of the animals, the smell of manure filled the outer court. Bartering between the owners of the animals and those looking for sacrifices could be overheard. Complaints and accusations that the moneychangers were ripping people off were constant. They turned God’s house into a marketplace. It wasn’t a place of worship, it was a place to do business.

So Jesus defending his Father’s house. John explains, **he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”** The Jews had turned the outer court of the temple into a marketplace, a place to buy and sell goods. It wasn’t conducive to worship. They didn’t give the proper respect to God’s house.

What is God’s house to you? There are some churches that seem nothing but marketplaces. They always seem to be selling this or that, one fundraiser follows right on the heels of another, they are always looking for ways to trick people into giving up their money or to support some cause. For others Church is nothing more than a place to be entertained, or a place to feel good about yourself, or a place to go

so that others in the community will notice you. And then for others God's house is a place to hang out with friends—to catch up on each other's week, like a social event—as if we are more interested in sharing a few laughs than we are worshipping the Lord. Some see it as a place to get married and a place to get buried and little more.

And those things certainly do take place here. Good Christian fellowship take place, the friends you meet here will remain friends throughout your life, baptisms, weddings, funerals—everything else does happen within these walls. But we often call this building and many like it, the house of the Lord.

When you enter someone's house you want to treat it with respect. You won't want to leave trash all over the place, track in muddy footprints, or write on the walls. No, you treat someone's house with respect. So how much more do we want to show honor and respect to the house of the Lord? But do we always do that. Or do we treat it like any other place? Do we treat it worse than we treat our own homes? At times messes are left, items are taken, broken things are left broken. Volunteers are hard to come by—even if it only requires an hour or two every so often. We are often more concerned about our own lives or our own houses than we are taking care of God's house.

By our words or actions—or lack thereof, we may indicate what is in our hearts, or isn't. Really, all of these things are really manifestations of something deeper. They may indicate a lack of love and respect for God and his Word. How we treat the house of the Lord may be an indication of what we think about the Lord himself.

When I asked that question earlier: What is God's house to you? I hope many of you first thought to yourself, "It's the place I worship the Lord." That's where we are first and foremost—a house of worship. We go here in order to praise and thank the Lord. We offer up our thanks and praise for everything he has done for us! Before anything else, that is what this building is.

Not only is this a place of worship, where we go to in order to praise and thank God for all that he has done for us, it is also the place where we learn about everything the Lord has done for us. It's the place where you study God's Word together with others. It's the place where you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord with like-minded believers. It's where you are reminded of Christ's perfect life, his suffering, death, and resurrection. It's a place where you are

assured that Christ paid for each and every one of your sins and that because of him you are considered pure and innocent in the eyes of the Lord. It's where you are comforted with the sure hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Christ's victory over death which took place three days after he died on the cross.

It's where you children are taught the history of God's people and the life and teachings of his son. It is where they were taught the basic truths of God's Word using Luther's small Catechism.

This is where you brought your children to the baptismal font where the Lord washed away their sins and welcomed them into his family. It is where you kneel before his altar and Christ gives you his true body and blood along with the bread and the wine for the forgiveness of sins.

When Jesus did what he did this the disciples remembered a verse from the psalm we just sang: **Zeal for my father's house will consume me.** We have the same zeal for the house of God as Jesus did. We get just as angry as God does when someone disrespects his house. Because anything that takes away from God's house as a place of worship is an act that disrespects God's house. Any disrespect to God's house, is really disrespect for God himself.

We know that God sent his Son to suffer and die to save us from our sins and promises to bring us to live with him in heaven. This knowledge leads us to give thanks to God for all the love and mercy he has given to us. One way we give thanks to God is taking care of his house. If you are a Christian then why wouldn't you want to make God's house as nice as it could be? Sure we don't need a nice place to praise God—many people praise him in gyms, storefronts, or houses. But look at Solomon's temple—God's people gave their very best to God as a way to praise and honor him. They didn't offer him their old jewelry, fool's gold, or precious metals that were no longer new and shiny, but they gave their very best.

And we not only have zeal for God's house, we also have zeal for all of God's teachings. We staunchly defend all of God's teachings. Sometimes it's hard to defend certain biblical teachings when they come under attack. It's easy for us simply to look the other way when we see someone sinning against the Lord; simply to ignore what they are doing—or at times, we may even defend their actions. But as Christians we defend all of God's teachings, just as we defend his

house. It does not matter what others think about us. We don't care if they are appalled at God's teachings, and if they accuse us of being unloving and narrow minded. Christ didn't care how others looked at him while he was turning over the money changing tables and driving the venders out of the temple. His only concern was obedience to God and his laws.

And so you say along with the Psalmist, **I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'let us go to the house of the Lord.'** You love God's house. Maybe you grew up in this congregation. Maybe your family has been members here for years. Perhaps you or your kids were baptized here and confirmed here. And you have some friends here. But that's not why you stay here. That's not what you love about here. It's because is the house of the Lord where you hear his word and worship him.

And so we love and honor God's house. We give it the proper respect—not only out of love and thanks to our Lord, but also out of respect for those who are worshiping him with us. We wouldn't want to turn God's house into a marketplace. And we don't want to make it a place for entertainment or a time for social hour. First and foremost God's house is a place to worship and praise our Lord. So we treat it with all of the love and care that we'd have for God himself. The one who gave up his body only to raise it again for our salvation. Amen.