

# NOT IN MY HOUSE!

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ February 28, 2016

<sup>13</sup> 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 money changers 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. (John 2:13-22)

Behold the Lamb of God for sinners slain,

There are certainly some impressive winning streaks in the world of sports, but one type of winning streak is something to which every athlete and fan can relate – a home winning streak. Both players and fans can take some pride in defending their home field, their home court, their home ice. Up until about a month ago, the Arizona Wildcats men’s basketball team had the longest home winning streak in the NCAA. The Golden State Warriors of the NBA are currently riding a 42 game home winning streak. Apart from winning a championship, a long home winning streak is a significant achievement in sports. A phrase that often goes with a home winning streak is “not in this house,” meaning that the home team will not let the away team have its way.

We can only guess whether Jesus would have been an avid sports fan, but chances are he would have understood the passion behind defending home turf. In fact, he displayed that passion in our gospel for this morning. In a zealous anger he defended God’s house – the temple. So often we get the impression that Jesus is just a nice guy and would never get mad or upset at anyone. But that just isn’t the case. When the time called for it, Jesus got mad, plum-mad-dog mean, but it wasn’t for a selfish reason, it was for a holy reason. He was defending God’s name and God’s honor. He was defending God’s house. Jesus said, “NOT IN MY HOUSE”

(I)

Jesus showed how serious he was about God and his Word throughout his ministry. But sometimes, people just didn’t get it. But his actions here would change that. The event we have before us this morning from the gospel of John took place early in Jesus’ ministry, at the first Passover he celebrated since his ministry began. The Passover, you may recall, was an annual celebration of the Jews as they remembered what God did for their ancestors in bringing them out of Egypt. Multitudes of Jews gathered in Jerusalem and filled the temple.

Jesus was one of those Jews who gathered in Jerusalem and went to the temple. What he saw when he got there was activity, but not the kind of activity that was meant to be happening. The sacrifices and rituals required demanded provisions. Animals had to be made available for those traveling from a distance, their quality checked by an inspector. Change had to be made for the foreign currency Jewish pilgrims brought with them for the temple tax. While these provisions were necessary, they were also subject to much abuse.

Anyone who entered the temple courts would have seen the money-changing and the animal sales and this would not have lead them to think of a spiritual relationship with God. Instead of expectant singing, visitors would have been more likely to hold onto their purses and noses – one would have heard bickering over animals and exchange rates, been overwhelmed with the stench of so many animals gathered in one place. This was not God's business, but man's and a profitable one at that.

If there was one thing similar about all of Jesus' trips to Jerusalem and the temple, it was that he was always about his Father's business. When he made his first Passover trip to Jerusalem as a young boy of 12, his parents accidentally left him behind, and only found him after three days in the temple talking with the teachers and rabbis. The reason he gave for his separation was that **"I needed to be about my Father's business."** Eighteen years didn't change anything with Jesus. On this trip too, he was about his Father's business. At first, it may have only been to fulfill the Law of Moses which required sacrifices and temple taxes. But when he saw what was going on in the Temple, his Father's business took a different approach.

Likely, not many people knew who Jesus was at the time, but they would soon know. He weaved together a collection of cords used to tie the animals up with into a whip. That first crack of the whip would have been the most startling. He drove out the cattle, the sheep and the goats. He overturned the tables of the money changers, coins scattered everywhere, and he demanded the sellers of doves to depart. No doubt even the hardest of consciences must have been pricked. No one raised any objections to him actually throwing out those who had turned the court into a marketplace, all they raised was his authority to do so.

The disciples stood there watching Jesus. While they had a much closer look at Jesus, even they may have been surprised at this display. They recalled a passage from the Old Testament, **"Zeal for your house will consume me."** That is how the Bible describes Jesus' outburst. It was not a sinful anger, but a zealous anger. He told the money changers, the animal sellers, and everyone who was listening, **NOT IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE!** Many Jews probably viewed the temple as "their" place of worship, and justified the abuse that had taken place this way. But Jesus reminded them that this was not their house with which they could do what they want, this was God's house, and they were merely guests in God's house. God does not tolerate the abuse of worship in his house. And Jesus showed how serious God is about this.

This was perhaps more evident as the children of Israel wandered through the desert and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, that portable worship structure. There was a reverence for the Lord, or at least a recognition of his presence. That seems to have been lost on many of the Jews, just as it can easily be lost on us as well.

When we come to church, we are coming to God's house. This is something that we talk about all the time, but do we really believe what we say and treat it that way? Do we treat our Church in a Box set-up as possessions of God? Now, generally speaking we don't find ourselves quibbling over animal prices or what

amount we will put in the offering plate. But are our thoughts always focused on the one we come to praise and worship, or are we distracted by personal thoughts? What's that person wearing? I wonder if my kids will act well in church today. I can't wait for going to lunch at Buddies. Now, maybe you don't have those exact thoughts running through your mind. Maybe your every thought is toward God and praising him here in church. But why limit yourself to just one hour every week?

One of the intriguing phenomena about being a pastor is that the behavior of many people seem to change when they're around you. All of a sudden their language cleans up, they boast of their extreme generosity, they say how much they love their church. Maybe they're telling the truth, but maybe they think that by telling the pastor how good they've been, they can pull the wool over my eyes. As if my presence necessitates better behavior. What they don't understand is that I'm not the one who will ultimately judge their behavior.

The God of the universe, the God who sees and knows all is the one they are needing to impress. In fact, he's the one we're all needing to impress. But not just during church on Sundays, but every single day of our lives, 24/7. And you know what? Our lives are not impressive. Not only have we not lived up to God's perfect standard throughout the week, but even our best efforts in church aren't good enough either. If Jesus were around today, he could still say, "NOT IN MY HOUSE." And he's serious.

This is one aspect of God that becomes crystal clear during Lent. God isn't indifferent toward our sin, he is serious about our sin. God isn't indifferent when we say, "I tried my best," he is serious when he says, "Be perfect!" And just like there was no one who could say Jesus was wrong in doing what he did in the temple 2,000 years ago, there is no one today who could say Jesus is wrong when he says, "NOT IN MY HOUSE."

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The only response to Jesus' act of zealous anger was the religious leaders' weak reply of "**What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do this?**" They didn't say the act of what Jesus did was wrong, they just wondered what authority he had to do this. They were basically saying, "If you have the 'authority' to challenge the Sanhedrin, then prove it. If not, then leave us and our temple practice alone." Jesus responded, "**Destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days.**"

Outwardly, it looked like Jesus was destroying the temple. The fact was that those buying and selling and the leaders who allowed, encouraged and participated in it were the destructive ones. Under their leadership, the temple had gone from being a house of prayer to being a marketplace and a stockyard. As they heartlessly destroyed the true worship of Israel, they would destroy the temple of his body by crucifixion. When they carried out that act, they would have the undeniable sign that they had been the temple-destroyers. Only God could rebuild it.

In typical shallowness, the Jewish leaders could only think about their precious physical temple. Out of unbelief they asked Jesus for a sign. Jesus gave them the sign that they were the real temple destroyers, but they didn't want to see it. And so instead he met them with a challenge – destroy me and I will rise again. And this is what would happen. In their hatred and animosity they drove Jesus to the cross. They destroyed the true temple of God. It was a destruction that no human hands could rebuild.

But it was only through this destruction that the hands of God were put to work. He rebuilt the temple. He rebuilt the temple by raising Jesus from the grave and refocusing all worship around him. We have the benefit of hindsight and can see God's plan complete. We can see how we too were the temple-destroyers by our own sins. And we can see how through the destruction of Jesus, God paid for our sin. He made it so there would be no more sin in his house. For that we can rejoice.

Jesus has been made the cornerstone of God's renewed house, and he is building us up into it. Peter says in his first letter, **"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."** And so our whole lives become dedicated to him, not just on a Sunday morning. And God promises, **"those who trust in him [Jesus] will never be put to shame."** Think about that. You will never be put to shame.

Our faith in Jesus may bring shame from the world, but it will never bring shame from God. What a comfort this brings as we go out and tell others about the good news of what Jesus has done. Before, it was our sins that separated us from the house of God. Now, our God has separated us from our sins. All because Jesus said, "NOT IN MY HOUSE!" Amen.