

John 2-12-25
Gentle Jesus, violent and angry!

Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

When I was in high school, I attended a huge youth group with an awesome band. One night, we sang a great song with these lyrics....

“Well, I won't back down
No, I won't back down
You can stand me up at the gates of hell
But I won't back down

No, I'll stand my ground
Won't be turned around
And I'll keep this world from draggin' me down
Gonna stand my ground
And I won't back down

Chorus

Hey, baby, there ain't no easy way out
Hey, I will stand my ground
And I won't back down.”

If you know who wrote this song, raise your hand. It is Tom Petty! This is a great song, but not a Christian song. In fact, it has nothing to do with Christianity. He wrote this song after an arsonist tried to burn his mansion down in California.

So why did we sing it at youth group? I have no clue!!!! But man, it's a great song. This raise some important questions—what should we sing at church? How important is worship?

Here is an even more important and foundational question—*does God care how we worship God?* Yes—he cares deeply! How do we know he cares deeply? Because of the story found in John 2:12-25.

In John 2:12-25 *we clearly see that Jesus is zealous for God honoring worship*. His zeal for God honoring worship is displayed in two ways...

First, Jesus is angered by false worship
Second, Jesus is essential for true worship

As we work through this passage, I want us to ask this simple question—do we share Christ's zeal for God honoring worship? With that in mind, let's look at our text.

First, Jesus is angered by false worship

How do we know Jesus is angry? He resorts to violence!

John 2:12 (ESV) — 12 After this (the wedding feast in Cana) he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

John 2:13 (ESV) — 13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

The Jewish Passover commemorated Israel's spectacular deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exod. 12), which took place 1500 years before Christ walked the earth.

Why did Jesus go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover at the temple? Because Jesus was zealous for God honoring worship!!!

John 2:14 (ESV) — 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

Show image of temple...

Temple worship involved sacrificing animals. Why? The sacrifices reminded Israel that someone had to pay the penalty for sin. For over a thousand years it was the animals.

Since many of these worshippers traveled great distances, it made little sense to bring their animals with them. Instead, they bought oxen, sheep, and pigeons from merchants just outside the temple. This was a useful service.

The money changers were present because every Jewish male had to pay the annual temple tax with Jewish coinage (Ex. 30:13, 14; Matt. 17:24–27). Foreigners had to exchange their money into the proper coinage for the tax.

This was also a useful service, but it was in the wrong location—let's keep reading.

John 2:15 (ESV) — 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.

Jesus walked into the temple complex to worship YHWH. Then he walked through the outer courts, known as the court of the gentiles (refer back to image). As he walked through the court of the gentiles, he looked left and saw merchants selling oxen, sheep, and pigeons. To his right he saw the moneychangers.

We can imagine what happened next...

Jesus thought, "what in the world are they doing in here?" His blood pressure rose, beads of sweat formed across his forehead, and he clenched his fists. He muttered under his breath, "don't they care about God's glory?" His anger was working up to a boil.

A few moments later, he can't take it anymore! He had to do something! He looked around and saw some thick ropes. He tied them together to make a whip. He ran up to the closest merchant and with anger in his eyes and a stern look on his face and said, "what in the world do you think you are doing selling merchandise in the court of the gentiles?" Then he grabbed the edge of the table with both hands and flipped it over, causing all the contents, including the money to fall to the ground. Then he brought down his whip as the merchant screamed bloody murder.

At this point everyone in the court of the gentiles stopped what they were doing and looked at Jesus—the madman. He kicks the oxen table over, he whips the sheep table, he whips the pigeon table, and he

whips the moneychanger's table. It is utter chaos. People are screaming, people are angry, Jesus is sweating profusely.

Tables crash on the ground, money rolls across the floor, animals are everywhere, people are running in every direction, trying to avoid the snap of the whip.

Then Jesus yells, "Leave this place, how dare you, turn my father's house into a house of trade."

The Lamb of God was acting like a lion!

One commentator writes,

"He was indignant and angry, and it was a burning, white-hot anger." (K. Hughes)

Illustration:

In the Lord of the Rings the Ents are a very old and a very large society of walking and talking trees. They are immensely strong and very wise. They rule and govern the forests of middle earth. For the most part, they are a very calm and gentle bunch.

But then, one of the hobbits informs the great counsel of Ents that Saruman the white is destroying their forests.

The hobbit expects them too immediately act. But they don't! The Ents are very slow to anger. They discuss their plans for days, frustrating the beegobbers out of the hobbits, before doing anything. But when they finally decide to act, they act with great violence.

They march to Saruman's fortress and unleash their fury on Saruman's evil empire, tearing apart his castle brick by brick.

God is like the Ents. He is very slow to anger, but when his anger is aroused, look at!!!

How do we know Jesus is angry? He resorts to violence!

Why is Jesus angry? People are distracted from worship!

John 2:16 (ESV) — 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

John 2:17 (ESV) — 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." (quoting Psalm 69:9)

Jesus cleanses the temple at the start of his ministry, as recorded in this passage, and he cleanses the temple a second time at the end of his ministry, as recorded in Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45, 46.

When Jesus cleanses the temple a second time, he chastises the religious leaders for financial corruption and extortion. He calls the temple "a den of robbers." (Mark 11:17).

But in John's account of the temple cleansing, Jesus says nothing about financial corruption. Instead, he focuses on the place. He says, "do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

One commentator writes, “The play on “house” makes the place, not the activity, the focus of attention.” (Klink)

Said another way, Jesus does not condemn the merchants for greed or corruption, but for simply being in the court of the gentiles. Why does this matter? By being in the court of the gentiles, the merchants were distracting the gentiles from worship.

The merchants transformed a place of worship into a noisy marketplace.

Jesus was zealous for undistracted God honoring worship!!!

Illustration:

People are zealous for lots of things.
Some people are zealous about making money... describe!
Others are zealous about health and fitness... describe!
Others are zealous about their hobbies... describe!
Others are zealous about cars...

What are you zealous for?

Application:

Let me ask a few application questions.

Jesus was zealous for worship, are we?

The context of our passage is temple worship. Since the gathered church replaces the temple, our context is corporate worship on the Lord’s Day.

Do we love gathering for worship in the house of God? What does this look like?

It starts with showing up every Sunday!!!

Sadly, many Christians treat the Sunday gathering as an optional thing. I will come when it is convenient. But listen to the Scriptures...

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV) — 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Sadly, many Christians don’t think that going to church matters!!! Wow!!!

How can we say we love Christ, when we don’t love what Christ loves???
How can we say we love Christ, when we don’t want to gather with his bride???
How can we say we love Christ, when we don’t share his zeal for worship in the house of God?

Meeting with a few friends for small group, or discussing the Bible at Starbucks with friends, or watching church on a screen is not a substitute for gathering with the saints on the Lord’s Day. We are exhorted by Holy Scripture to gather with the saints on the Lord’s Day in order to sing, hear preaching, and celebrate the sacraments.

What would Jesus do if he walked the earth today? He would be at church every single Lord's Day...

Let me ask another question...

Jesus was zealous for undistracted worship, are we?

Remember, the issue in our passage was undistracted worship...

We can we do to promote undistracted worship in the house of God? Let me give some practical suggestions...

Show up on time... when you walk in late, everyone is distracted.

Avoid talking to others during the preaching and singing....

Avoid getting up and walking around during the service... (you may have a legit reason to walk around)

If your kids are screaming, take them out. Caveat—I love the sound of screaming children, for a few seconds...

Parents, train your children to go to the bathroom before or after church...

There needs to be lots of grace...

Yet the church is not a concert, or a lecture hall, or a movie theater. The church is the holy assembly of the resurrected and reigning king of kings and lord of lords.

Let me ask another question...

Does your Jesus get angry?

Many people *only* think of Jesus as meek and lowly and gentle and mild.

Or they only think of him as being really nice... (niceness has become the new standard of morality)

He will never do anything to upset anyone.

He loves and accepts everyone regardless of their behavior.

He is often portrayed as weak and effeminate. He is the kind of guy who would rather knit sweaters while eating kale than play tackle football.

If this is the Jesus you worship, you are worshipping a false God.

According to the Scriptures, Jesus is both the lion and the lamb. And someday he will return in fury to judge the nations.

Revelation 19:11–16 (ESV) — **11** Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. **12** His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. **13** He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. **14** And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. **15** From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. **16** On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Are you ready to meet the risen Christ???

If you are not a Christian, trust me, you don't want to encounter the risen Christ.

Is there any hope??? Yes... This brings us to the second point.

First, Jesus is angered by false worship!

Second, Jesus is essential for true worship!

What makes Jesus essential for true worship? A few things...

Jesus' identity makes him the place of worship!

John 2:18–21 (ESV) — 18 So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” **19** Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” **20** The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” **21** But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

Jesus made some pretty bold claims in the temple. Naturally the religious leaders want him to prove that he had the right to make such claims, so they ask him for a sign. Jesus says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” This is an astonishing claim! And just in case there is any doubt about his claim, verse 21 makes it very clear that Jesus is claiming to be the temple.

Wow!!!

To understand the magnitude of this claim we must understand the history of the temple.

Roughly 1500 years before Jesus walked the earth God instructed the nation of Israel to build a tabernacle.

The tabernacle was a massive tent assembled for Israel's worship.

It was the place where the laws of God were stored.

It was the place where animals were sacrificed.

It was the place where Israel was reminded of their sins, God's holiness, and God's extravagant grace.

Most importantly, it was the only place on earth where God manifested his holy presence.

Around 1000 BC, King Solomon gave the tabernacle a permanent home when he constructed a magnificent stone temple.

The temple was central to Israel's worship for over 1000 years.

Then along comes Jesus.

John 1:14 (ESV) — 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 2:19–21 (ESV) — 19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” **20** The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” **21** But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

Jesus is the true temple!!!

The temple was the place where God met with man, Jesus is the place where God meets with man.

The temple was the place where God's laws were stored, Jesus is the fulfillment of the law.

The temple was the place where animals were sacrificed for sinners, Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for sins.

The temple was the center of Israel's worship, Jesus, the new temple, is the center of new covenant worship.

Application:

What is the takeaway???

Jesus is the temple, the sacrifice inside the temple, and the very manifestation of God's presence!

When Jesus was sacrificed on the cross as the perfect lamb of God, he said, "It is finished."

This means...

There is no more need for a physical temple.

There is no more need to sacrifice animals.

There is no more need to pay the temple tax.

There is no more need to rely on a priest to get into God's presence.

There is no more need to do anything, to be in God's presence (expand).

Jesus Christ did everything necessary to usher you into God's very presence. He died on the cross for your sins, as the perfect sacrifice, allowing you to be forgiven, and making the temple obsolete.

Are you trusting him and him alone to be your sacrifice and to usher you into God's presence?

He is the ultimate temple sacrifice.

He is the ultimate manifestation of God's presence.

He is the only pathway into God's presence.

Jesus Christ is the temple!

Do you know him?

Jesus' identity makes him the place of worship.

Jesus' resurrection makes him the arbitrator of worship!

John 2:18–20 (ESV) — 18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

The religious leaders ask Jesus, "What gives you the right to come in here with a whip and wreak havoc on our temple???" You must show us a sign that you have the right to tell us how to worship."

Jesus says, "OK, you want a sign. Here is the sign, 'destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.'"

They respond by saying, “It has taken 46 years to build this temple...” What do they mean?

King Herod started to remodel the Jerusalem temple around 20BC.

The pharisees are saying, “Jesus, are you crazy? It has taken king Herod 46 years to build this temple, and you are going to rebuild it in three days. We don’t think so!!!”

But Jesus was referring to the temple of his body. He was saying, “destroy this body of mine, the only temple that matters, and I will raise it up in three days.” His resurrection from the grave was one of many signs in the gospel of John proving that he was the son of God. Since he is the son of God, he is lord of the temple. Since he is the lord of the temple, he has the right to them how to worship.

Application:

Here is the point!!!

Jesus’ life, death, and especially his resurrection from the grave gives him the right to direct not only the pharisees worship but everyone’s worship.

His resurrection proves that he is the king of kings and lord of lords.

Christians are often accused of being narrow minded, arrogant, and bigoted for making exclusive truth claims. Maybe some of you present this morning have thought this? I get it!

But why do Christians make exclusive truth claims? Because Jesus rose from the grave. Since Jesus rose from the grave, he is God, since he is God, he has the right to make exclusive truth claims. When Christians make exclusive truth claims they are merely obeying Jesus.

What is Jesus telling everyone to do?

He is telling all of us to worship him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. He wants us to be zealous for God honoring worship.

This means that...

We must worship God with our time.

Our money

Our careers

Our speech

Our entertainment choices

Our relationships

Our sexuality

And our bodies

Why?

Jesus lived, died, and rose from the grave to usher us into God’s eternal presence. This gives him the right to tell us what to do.

Let’s pray...