**Believe In What is True Not What You See**

Third Sunday in Lent - March 3, 2024 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 - John 2:13-22

**Psalm 19**

**For the director of music. A psalm of David.**

**1**The heavens declare the glory of God;
    the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
**2**Day after day they pour forth speech;
    night after night they reveal knowledge.
**3**They have no speech, they use no words;
    no sound is heard from them.
**4**Yet their voice[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2019&version=NIV#fen-NIV-14173b)] goes out into all the earth,
    their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
**5**    It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
    like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
**6**It rises at one end of the heavens
    and makes its circuit to the other;
    nothing is deprived of its warmth.

**7**The law of the Lord is perfect,
    refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
    making wise the simple.
**8**The precepts of the Lord are right,
    giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
    giving light to the eyes.
**9**The fear of the Lord is pure,
    enduring forever.
The decrees of the Lord are firm,
    and all of them are righteous.

**10**They are more precious than gold,
    than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
    than honey from the honeycomb.
**11**By them your servant is warned;
    in keeping them there is great reward.
**12**But who can discern their own errors?
    Forgive my hidden faults.
**13**Keep your servant also from willful sins;
    may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
    innocent of great transgression.

**14**May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
    be pleasing in your sight,
    Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

**John 2:13-22 (NIV)**

**13**When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14**In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. **15**So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. **16**To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” **17**His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%202%3A13-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26113a)]

**18**The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

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

**20**They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” **21**But the temple he had spoken of was his body. **22**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.

**WHY IS JOHN’S RECORD DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER GOSPELS?**

When interpreting and preaching the temple incident from the Gospel of John we must address why it is in a different time sequence and has a different emphasis when compared to the other Gospels.

**All four Gospels tell the story of the cleansing of the temple** (see Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48), but the others place it near the end of Jesus’ life, and indicate it provokes the chief priests and scribes to plot to kill Jesus (Mark 14:10).

Most scholars believe the timing placement by Matthew, Mark and Luke placing the cleansing of the temple toward the end of Jesus’ life. In these records the cleansing of the temple is demonstrated to be a significant incident leading the Jewish religious authorities to seek the crucifixion of Jesus. This would certainly make sense it would upset the religious leaders. This reality would also make it unlikely Jesus could come from nowhere so early in his ministry to cleanse the temple without stirring more significant opposition than John records.

**So, why does John record this event in a different sequence?**

I have mentioned previously in teachings, in reading scripture we must place the various writings in context not only historically but also considering the focus and intent of the writer.

The purpose of the Synoptics is quite different from the Gospel of John. Matthew Mark and Luke focus more the history of Jesus’ life and recordation of facts while John is focused upon the theological significance of Jesus’ life and often groups events in an order to emphasize their significance. It would be consistent with this goal for John to move a story out of sequence, to establish the theological importance of Jesus’ life and the various events.

Understanding the focus of John’s writing, we can see John was introducing an early emphasis on Jesus’ death and resurrection.

This would explain an apparent abrupt transition from the Cana wedding story, Jesus’ **first** miraculous sign, to the temple-cleansing story which occurs in Verse 12 of John’s account.

John is also demonstrating a difference from apparent faith and worship and real faith and worship.

There are many things recorded in scripture where God guides His people to act or do things; and, the people seemingly comply in some fashion. However, when examining the totality of scripture we see the people’s response if too often in form but not in substance. The building of the temple, much like the building of the Arc of the Covenant are two examples.

The actions of humans over history, including those who identify themselves as God’s people, too often get focused upon the physical – what they can see and feel- and lose focus upon the spiritual truths and the true focus of faith and worship. This has led to many man-made rules and regulations which have apparent spiritual value but actual distract from the true worship God desires.

**THAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAN-MADE RELIGION AND TRUE WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**

In the record by John, Jesus orders his Father’s house not be made a marketplace. NOTE, for the temple system, including required sacrifices, to exist a marketplace for person’s to acquire appropriate animals for sacrifice. In John’s account Jesus is not really quibbling about method but is focusing upon the heart and the true worship. In doing so he demonstrates the unimportance of this sacred temple and how this physical structure is really unimportant. At the center of such theological focus by John is the fundamental question of God’s location.

**This should remind us of the exchange John records of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well** (John 4). T raised the human conflict of the appropriate physical location to worship and Jesus advised her: “But a time is coming and now has come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24)

**BACK TO TODAYS PASSAGE**

At verse 19 in response to the religious leaders request for proof of his authority Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

To this the religious leaders reverted to human knowledge of what they could see and feel and responded and verse 20 “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

Here John specifically provides us with the significance of what he is recording about what Jesus said at verse 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

John goes on to say the disciples did not understand this significance until later reporting at verse 22 “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.”

AS AN ASIDE: The fact the disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying until after they had experienced the crucifixion and resurrection should give us guiding principles:

**Don’t be too hard on yourself** **if you do not understand everything you read in scripture or about the events of the world and God’s Kingdom. God has made clear, He will reveal what we need to know and someday it will all make sense. In the meantime, have faith and believe even when we do not fully understand, which is true faith and worship.**

**There is no man-made structure, location, religion, specific words, or rituals to connect you to God. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life; and, all are freely given and available to all.**

**As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth:**

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (NIV) **18**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19**For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
    the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+1%3A18-25+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28383a)]

**20**Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21**For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. **22**Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, **23**but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, **24**but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25**For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

**COMMUNION**

I really cannot come up with a better introduction to following Jesus’ call for us to experience communion. Jesus called for us to do communion in remembrance. He meant in remembrance of true worship and the foundation for such worship. We are loved! The evidence of that love is all around us in creation and proven by Jesus willingly going to the cross; through the actions of Jesus, we are sealed in an eternal loving relationship. Let us pray:

**CLOSING PRAYER (BEFORE COMMUNION)**

Heavenly Father,

Although we do not understand everything yet,

we have faith in your loving promises.

Although we struggle with the evils and pain in this present time,’

we have faith in your loving promises.

Although the world and man-made religion tries to lead us away,

 we have faith in your loving promises.

After all is said and done, even when we feel lost.

 we have faith in your loving promises.

We trust your eternal love for us.

We are thankful for the loving sacrifice willingly provided by your Son, our Savior.

We take part in communion in remembrance as we wait patiently for your eternal promises to come more fully.

We pray with confidence because a way has been opened for us by the loving sacrifice of or Lord and Savior, so we pray in his name, Amen