

Cleaning Church

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[0 : 0 0] Well if we could, with the Lord's help this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John and chapter 2, we'll read again from verse 12. John chapter 2 at verse 12.

After this he that is Jesus, he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples and they stayed there for a few days. The Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money-changers sitting there 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 and he told those who sold the pigeons, take these things away, do not make my father's house, a house of trade and so on.

You know since COVID came and lockdown landed church cleaning has taken on a whole new different role because prior to the coronavirus outbreak we had as a congregation we had a little, a good little rota going with different people from the congregation. They would come in once a week and they would empty the bins and they would clean the surfaces and they would Hoover through the church but since COVID came and lockdown landed our good little church rota has now gone completely out the window because in accordance with government guidelines and in order to protect the public and to prevent the possible spread of the coronavirus we not only have to now log everyone's name and address on a database for test and trace purposes but we also have to provide hand sanitizer, we have to ensure social distancing, we have to wear a face covering, we're not allowed to sing and we have to ensure that all the pews and surfaces of the church are clean which is why we along with many other congregations and many public places we have had to all go out and buy anti-viral disinfectants because when restrictions are lifted further and the church does reopen cleaning the church will take on a whole new role altogether.

It will be a lot of work which we as a congregation we should be prepared to get involved in that's just a little a little note for you but you know when we come to this passage in John's Gospel we see that Jesus here he's engaging in church cleaning but his church cleaning is of a completely different kind because Jesus what we see here is that Jesus is disinfecting the church from another virus it's the virus of apathy arrogance and abuse that's what Jesus is doing here in John chapter 2. Jesus is disinfecting the church from the virus of apathy arrogance and abuse but you know the sad reality is that Jesus still has to disinfect the church from the same virus the virus of apathy arrogance and abuse because as we discovered last week when we were at the wedding in Cana of Galilee we saw there that Jesus is our bridegroom and that we as the church we are his bride and if Jesus loves the church which he does and he gave himself for her if Jesus loves the church then he will be cleaning church and he will be cleaning church in order to remove the virus of apathy arrogance and abuse and you know the thing about Jesus is that when he's cleaning church and we see it here he doesn't do it silently or subtly no he does it with power and passion for the glory of his name and that's what we see here in this passage in John chapter 2. Jesus is cleaning church. Jesus is cleaning church and you know I'd like us just to think about this passage this morning under three headings three headings the timing of Jesus the temper of Jesus and the temple of Jesus the timing of Jesus the temper of Jesus and the temple of Jesus so first of all the timing the timing of Jesus we'll read again in verse 12 after this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples and they stayed there for a few days the

Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem now in these verses John the evangelist he tells us that after the wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water into wine we're told that Jesus his mother his brother and his disciples they went down to Capernaum but you know it's interesting that Capernaum was 16 miles northeast of Cana which means that they went up the

map but they actually went down in elevation they went up the map but down in elevation and then we're told that a few days later Jesus his mother brothers and disciples they traveled up to Jerusalem but Jerusalem is a hundred miles south it's south of Capernaum meaning that Jerusalem is down the map but up in elevation so Cana to Capernaum was up the map but down in elevation and Capernaum to Jerusalem was down the map but up in elevation and you know when you read it in the Bible it can become quite confusing but you know we actually do the same on the West side don't we because some people say that they go down to Ness but up to Carly other say that they go up to Ness but down to Carly but as I often say to the elders in Carly as they're in their mother I tell them that it's it's down to Ness and it's down to Carly because Barvis is the pinnacle of the West side and everywhere else is down hill of course that's not true but but you know when the adieu considered the city of Jerusalem they always thought of it as the pinnacle of Israel because [6 : 40] Jerusalem was the focal point of the nation and Jerusalem was not only the nation's capital city and where the palace was and where the throne of King David was situated but Jerusalem was also where the temple was to be located and Jerusalem was the place where all the Jews congregated together to celebrate all these annual festivals each year and like Jesus his mother brothers and disciples those traveling to Jerusalem would have had to go down the map but up in elevation and it was always up in elevation and it was up in elevation because you always traveled upwards to Jerusalem because Jerusalem was situated on a mountain called Mount Zion and because they were going up to Jerusalem for the Passover they would have been traveling Jesus his mother and brothers and disciples they would have all been traveling with many other Jews from all over the nation and they would have been coming together and they would have been singing they would have been singing the songs of ascents as you know the songs of a center the songs of degrees they're a group of 15 Psalms in the book of Psalms as Virgin called these 15 Psalms he called them a Psalter within the Psalter and they were the Psalms numbered from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134 and they're called the songs of ascents because they were sung by all the Jews as they ascended Mount Zion they might have been coming down the map but they were always ascending Mount Zion towards the city of Jerusalem to congregate at the temple for the annual feasts that were being held there and it said that when the Jews would begin their journey of ascent towards Jerusalem they would gather together in their family groups they would gather together with all their neighbors and they would congregate at a central point in their village or their town or their city but you know just before they would set off on their pilgrimage up towards Jerusalem someone would shout from within this large gathering someone would shout let us go up let us go up and then they would be this unified response from the gathering where all the pilgrims they would all say we will go up we will go up and they would then leave as one people and they would begin their journey towards Jerusalem and you know that's what's expressed in one of the songs of ascent

Psalm 122 it begins I joy went to the house of God go up they sent to me Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall standing be but you know as we said Jesus his mother brothers and disciples they are making this ascent towards Jerusalem and they're going to celebrate the feast of Passover and as you know the feast of Passover it's held every year according to the lunar calendar so the Passover would take place around the end of March or the beginning of April depending upon when the full moon takes place and the feast of Passover it celebrates and it commemorates the occasion in Israel's history when there were slaves in Egypt and it was that moment when the angel of death passed over all the the Israelite homes because the doorposts and the lintels of their homes were covered in the blood of a spotless lamb but at the same time we're also told back in in Exodus 12 that the angel of death passed over all the

Egyptian homes killing the firstborn of of the Egyptians and that was the means by which the Israelites fled from Egypt and experienced salvation and you know as Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover what John is doing here is that he's reminding us again that Jesus is the Passover lamb Jesus is the lamb of God who is to take away the sin of the world that's what John is doing here again and with Jesus's ministry now underway as he is ascending towards Jerusalem from the Passover John is saying to us this is a foreshadowing of what's to come John is saying to us that two years from now Jesus will be going up to Jerusalem not in in song but in sorrow two years from now Jesus will be going up to Jerusalem not not in praise but in pain two years from now says John Jesus will be going up to Jerusalem not with a lamb for slaughter but as a lamb for slaughter and you know for John the timing of Jesus was everything because this was the first Passover which Jesus attended during his short three year ministry and this was the first of three Passover

feasts that John is going to record in his gospel so the first Passover feast is here in John chapter 2 then the second Passover feast a year later takes place in John chapter 6 and then the third and final Passover takes place in John chapter 12 onwards but you know as a gospel writer John not only keeps track of when the Passover took place but he also talks about when all the Jewish feasts took place he's always telling us what time of year it is he's always telling us what feast is taking place and it's all so that we will have a timeline of events a timeline of events that are leading up to that hour the hour when

Jesus will offer himself as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world my friend John is drawing our attention to the timing of Jesus and he's reminding us that the timing of Jesus is perfect the timing of Jesus is always on time because my friend Jesus is never late he's never out of sync he's never delayed belated behind schedule or overdue no Jesus is always on time my friend the timing of Jesus is perfect it was perfect for his life and it is perfect in your life too although you might look at your circumstances and situations in your life today and wonder how is the timing of Jesus perfect just now but you know I assure you I assure you that nothing is wasted with him nothing is wasted because even when life takes that unexpected twist and your world is turned upside down in a moment with with the news that's news that's devastating news of a diagnosis or even a death even then even then the timing of Jesus is perfect because in our darkness and in our distress and in our devastation Jesus is there and Jesus is assuring us that nothing or no one will help us except him because he's the cure to our chaos my friend he's the remedy to our ruin he's the solution to our sin sickness suffering and sorrow he's a refuge under strength and a never present help in our time of trouble and he's he's there for us in our time of trouble because his timing is perfect therefore my friend what we need to do with Jesus today and every day is trust him trust him we need to trust the timing of Jesus because the timing of

[15:07] Jesus is perfect the timing of Jesus is perfect and so we see the timing of Jesus but then secondly we see the temper of Jesus the temper of Jesus look at verse 14 it says in the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changer sitting there 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 now when Jesus reached Jerusalem he arrived to discover that the temple had been dishonored and defiled because as we read there were animal merchants and money changers and they were there conducting their business inside the temple court and as we read there the animal merchants they were in the temple courts and they were selling their oxen and their sheep and their pigeons that were to be used for substitutionary sacrifices of worship because every worshiper who was traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover they were to bring a substitutionary sacrifice with them to offer at the temple but you know for convenience sake especially because people were traveling down the map and they were going up in elevation they were traveling quite a distance so for convenience sake a worshiper could buy their substitutionary sacrifice they could buy it from an animal merchant when they arrived in Jerusalem I suppose it would be the same as when you arrive on your holiday destination and there are all these shops that are selling holiday essentials that you could have brought with you but to save you carrying them they've made them available for you on arrival and of course in order to make a profit from the tourist industry these essential items that are available when we arrive on holiday they're all priced a lot higher than normal which is just what it was like in Jerusalem at the Passover the animal merchants had all their stalls they had all their stalls set out to sell these substitutionary sacrifices and they were there to make a profit from all these traveling worshippers and there would have been thousands of them and what's more they were able to cater for for all the needs of the worshippers because they were selling the oxen and the sheep and the pigeons and as a worshipper you would come to the animal merchant and you would buy your substitutionary sacrifice according to your class so if you were wealthy if you were from a rich upper class you would buy an ox if you were from more of a middle class you would buy a sheep but if you were poor or from a lower working class there was provision for you to buy a pigeon no one was refused no one was restricted no one was rejected because of their financial status and that wasn't because of the the animal merchants that was because the Lord had graciously made provision the Lord had made a provision for everyone and anyone to come and worship him with their substitutionary sacrifice every worshipper regardless of who they are or where they're from was invited to come and offer their substitutionary sacrifice to the Lord and you know once a worshipper had brought a substitutionary sacrifice from one of the animal

merchants in the outer court of the temple they would then take it to the priest and the priest would kill their substitutionary sacrifice by slitting its throat and catching the blood of the animal in a bronze basin and the temple court you could say it has often been more likened to a slaughterhouse than to a sanctuary because of the amount of blood and the all the death that was taking place but you know for a worshipper arriving at the temple and for a worshipper to witness the substitutionary sacrifice to witness the life of that animal draining away before their eyes it was to be a vivid reminder to them of what they deserved because of their sin because what they deserved was death what they deserved was punishment and yet the Bible assured them that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin but of course my friend we don't need to approach God with the blood of an ox or a sheep or a pigeon because we have Jesus we have Jesus today and he is our substitutionary sacrifice he's the one who offered himself as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world you know is that know what the hymn might be sent to us he affirms to us that today in the Gospel there's a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains they lose all their guilty stains and so these animal merchants they had all the substitutionary sacrifices to cater for for all the needs of worshipers as they arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover but as we're told they were also money-changers and they were situated there in the outer court and they were also providing a service for those who were arriving in Jerusalem and as you would expect people arriving in Jerusalem they would have been arriving from all over the nation and even from the within the Roman Empire and because they were from different places they would have had different currencies and so in order to buy from the animal merchants they needed to convert their currency they needed to have the correct currency but you know they also needed to to pay a temple tax there was a temple tax and put imposed upon every Jewish male over the age of 20 and of course the money changers they would convert the currency of all these worshipers they were converted for a charge a percentage for their service but you know when you read this it seems that the temper of Jesus was raised not so much because of what the animal merchants and the money changers were doing but where they were doing it the issue wasn't what they were doing the issue was where they were doing it because they were doing it in the temple court they were conducting their business in effect at the church door and they were making their fortune by fleecing the worshipers as they came through the church door they my friend they had transformed the temple into a marketplace they had changed the courts of God's house into a cattle stall they had converted the church into the co-op that's what they had done they had converted the church into the co-op and instead of hearing the murmur of prayer inside God's house all that could be heard in the temple was the bellowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep and you know this is what raised the temper of Jesus this is what angered Jesus and we read that in verse 15 making a whip of cords he drove them out of the temple with the sheep and oxen and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables and he told those who sold the pigeons take these things away do not make my father's house a house of trade and as disciples remember what was written zeal for your house will consume me now when we speak about the temper of Jesus or Jesus becoming angry it's not like our temper or our anger because our temper our anger can be raised very quickly when we're angry we our anger can be unjustified to the point that we fly off the handle or we lose the rag or we become enraged about something that we later regret and say something that we'd later regret and you know that's what we're like which is why the Bible repeatedly teaches us that we're not to hate anyone but we're to love one another we're to seek peace and we're to pursue it earnestly we're to put away bitterness and wrath and anger and evil speaking and if we do become angry the Bible says do not sin it says control your tongue because your tongue is an unruly evil set on fire by hell you know there was a proverb which my mother would often quote to us as children and she would remind us that we need to keep our cool and it was a proverb from Proverbs 15 verse 1 a soft answer turns away wrath but many words stir up anger a soft answer turns away wrath but many words stir up anger but you know when it comes to Jesus his temper was justified his anger was righteous anger his emotions were driven by zeal for the glory of God and as we said earlier when Jesus is cleaning church he doesn't do it silently or subtly no he does it with power and passion for the glory of his name but you know the reason Jesus was so angry was that in the past this is the thing in the past the animal merchants and all the money changers they were to be located not only outside the temple courts but actually outside the city walls of Jerusalem because back then way back then the Jews would never have dared to trade in the

temple they thought of the temple as this holy place on holy ground but now because of this the downward spiritual state of the nation they were trading in the temple and they were maneuvering all their merchandise inside God's house and you know my friend it's a solemn reminder of how things had changed over time and how things have progressed over time and how things had developed not for the better but for worse over time and they had moved further and further and further away from the Lord to the point my friend that the church had become lax in their views they have become lazy in their worship and they had become loose in their commitment to the Lord they become liberal the church had become lax in their views lazy in their worship and loose in their commitment to the Lord they were overcome with apathy they were overrun with arrogance and [26 : 27] And they were oblivious to the abuse of God's house. You know my friend, the temper of Jesus was raised and rightly raised. And Jesus was angry because the people, the people in God's house were hampering and hindering and holding back the gospel.

And you know the same was true. The same was true at the timing of the Reformation during the 16th century. Because you remember the Pope.

The Pope wanted to build his great new Basilica of Saint Peter's. And in order to finance it, he sold indulgences to the people. He told the people that their families, their loved ones will escape the fires of hell if they will only pay the church.

There was the mantra when the coin in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs. That was the mantra they used. And of course, this enraged Martin Luther to the point that Luther, he nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg.

And he issued the clarion call for Reformation in the church. And from the 16th century, the Reformation spread across Europe into our own nation here.

[27 : 46] And you know, my Christian friend, we always need to be careful that as time progresses, we are not moving further and further away from the Lord.

We always need to be careful that we're not guilty of being overcome with apathy or overrun with arrogance or even oblivious to the abuse of God's house. We always need to be careful that we're not as the Lord's people hampering, hindering or holding back the gospel.

You know, my friend, we always need to be careful that we're not becoming lax in our views or lazy in our worship or loose in our commitment to the Lord. We always need to be careful that we are not becoming liberal.

And you know, this is particularly relevant for us when the church is closed and we're unable to meet together physically. Because, you know, we should make every effort to meet together as a congregation, even using the technology that's provided for us.

In fact, you know, we have no excuse because we don't even have to leave our home. It's all there for us.

[28 : 58] We can sit comfortably in our own home and meet together. My friend, we should make every effort to ensure that we're not guilty of being overcome with apathy or overrun with arrogance or oblivious to the abuse of God's house.

We should be very careful to ensure that we're not hampering, hindering or holding back the gospel. And we should make every effort to ensure that we're not becoming lax in our views or lazy in our worship or loose in our commitment to the Lord.

Because, my friend, that's what raises the temple of Jesus. That's what causes Jesus to be angry with his bride.

And so we've considered the timing of Jesus, the temper of Jesus. But lastly, and briefly, the temple of Jesus, the temple of Jesus.

Look at verse 18. So the Jews sent to him, what sign do you show for us for doing these things? Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

[30 : 04] The Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and you will raise it up. In three days. But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this. And they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

So after Jesus had cleansed the temple, many of the Jews who gathered in the temple for the Passover, they quite naturally asked Jesus, what sign do you show us for doing these things? And Jesus, he gives the most profound answer that not even his disciples understood what Jesus meant, as we're told there, until after his resurrection.

Because Jesus said to the crowds, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. Of course, the Jews immediately began thinking about the physical temple in Jerusalem.

[31 : 04] Because you remember the first temple was built in around 1000 BC. It was first built by Solomon, but then it was destroyed by the Babylonians around 586 BC.

The temple was then later rebuilt under Zerubbabel with the help of Ezra and Nehemiah. And that was around 515 BC. And then in 37 BC, King Herod, he restored the temple using the public parish, only for it to be destroyed again in 70 AD.

But you know, although Jesus wasn't referring to the physical temple, you know, even to speak about the temple being destroyed again, it was a painful subject for the Jews.

Because as we said, the temple was the focal point of the nation. The temple was the worship center of Israel. The temple was where all blessing flowed from.

Therefore, to suggest that the temple will be destroyed was painful to hear. Because the reality was, every Jew knew that the temple wasn't what it used to be.

[32 : 13] Every Jew knew that the temple wasn't what it used to be. And I say that because during the reign of King Solomon, the glory of God dwelt in the temple in the form of a cloud, the glory cloud, the shakaina glory.

But when Jerusalem was invaded by the Babylonians, the temple was destroyed and the glory of God departed. And even though nearly 100 years later, after the Israelites returned from exiling Babylon and restored the city of Jerusalem and even rebuilt the temple, even though they did all these things, the glory of God never returned.

The temple wasn't what it used to be because the glory of God wasn't present. But you know, the prophet Haggai, he gave the Jews this glimmer of hope when he prophesied that the glory of the latter temple will be greater than the glory of the former temple.

But you know, Haggai's prophecy, it wasn't about a place of worship. It was about a passion to worship. His prophecy wasn't about the temple in Jerusalem.

His prophecy was about the temple of Jesus. And this is what John is highlighting to us. He's highlighting something that he already highlighted in his prologue when John said that Haggai's prophecy, the prophecy that the glory of the latter temple will be greater than the glory of the former temple.

[33 : 44] John says this has now been fulfilled in the Persian of Jesus Christ because John said when the word became flesh, we have seen his glory.

God's glory has appeared to us. The glory has appeared and it's the glorious of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

God's glory has appeared to John in the Persian of Jesus Christ. And you know, even though the Israelites tried to make the temple more appealing by bringing in the animal merchants and the money changers into the temple court and even though Herod had tried to make the temple more aesthetically pleasing using the public parish, even though they had done all these things, the glory of God was still not present.

The glory of God was still not present and the Jews knew that. And you know my friend, it should be a reminder to us that, you know, it doesn't matter how appealing or aesthetically pleasing we make God's house.

That doesn't ensure that the glory of God is present. The glory of God can only be present through the preaching of Jesus Christ because the glory of God is revealed to us not in a place of worship, but in a person to worship.

[35 : 15] My friend, it's not a building that we must come to, but we must come to Jesus himself. And that's what John is assuring us here. Jesus cleansed the temple because he was telling people, I am the temple.

I am the new temple. And you must come to me for salvation. My friend, we must come to Jesus for salvation because Jesus is our temple.

Jesus died as our substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus rose again so that we could have the promise of eternal life. Therefore my friend, you must not delay, but come to Jesus today.

You must not delay, but come to Jesus today. And the thing is, you don't need to come into this building to receive Christ.

You don't need to come to the church to receive Jesus for salvation. You just need to go unbended knee in your own home and even in the secret of your own heart.

[36 : 23] And you need to cry to Jesus for mercy because Jesus is your only way of salvation. Jesus is the Lamb of God who will take away your sin.

Jesus is on offer to you today, my friend. Therefore you must not delay, but come to Jesus today. Come to Him where you are, right here, right now. And you ask Him to have mercy upon you. Say to Him, God be merciful to me, a sinner. You must not delay, but come to Jesus today. Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

[37 : 22] Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God, may I give thanks to Thee for the reminder this morning that Jesus is our temple and that He is the one whom we must come to.

That He is our Lamb that we must be cleansed through. And Lord we thank Thee that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is our temple in whom we must worship. That we must be in Christ. That we must be united to Christ by faith. That we must be all joined to Him and know Him as our Lord and Saviour.

And Lord we pray that for those sitting at home that they would know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. That they would not put it off any longer. That they would not procrastinate any further. But that they would come on bended knee. That they would come in their own home and in the secret of their own heart. And confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[38 : 30] Forgive us Lord we pray where we may hinder the Gospel. Forgive us we ask that for the times that we may hamper the message. But Lord we plead that even today that as Thy Word goes out that it would be pleasing in Thy sight to use it for Thy glory to bring sinners to Thyself that they would be rejoicing in the presence of the angels today over sinners repenting.

O do us good and we pray go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well we will bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing to God's praise in Psalm 122.

Psalm 122 as we mentioned earlier it's one of the songs of ascent that were sung by the Jews as they ascended towards Jerusalem for the annual feasts.

So we're singing Psalm 122 we'll sing the whole Psalm together. I joined when to the house of God go up they said to me Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall standing be.

Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the tribes go up the tribes of God go thither. We'll sing the whole Psalm to God's praise.

[39 : 49] I joined when to the house of God go up they said to me Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall standing be.

Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the tribes go up the tribes of God go thither.

Jerusalem as a city on the end to God's name thanks to him our throne of judgment in the throne song in it's highest estate.

Pray and share Jerusalem in God peace and diversity let them above me and my peace have still prosperity.