



Text: John 2:13-22¹

Series: *Life in His Name* ... The Message of John's Gospel

Title: Part 5 ... Jesus' Passion for True Worship

Date: October 10, 2010

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

I want us to think together this morning about **Jesus' passion for worship**.

The history of the word "**passion**" is actually rooted in the life of Jesus Christ. The word "passion" comes from a Latin root that means "suffering" and the original use of the word "passion" was to describe **the sufferings of Jesus Christ in his trial and in his death on the cross**. A few years ago, Mel Gibson used the historic meaning of the word "passion" in his film, "The Passion of the Christ" which was, of course, a film about the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

But in recent years the word "passion" has come to mean **a strong emotion of love, anger or enthusiasm for something**. Social reformers declare their passionate commitment to the righting of abuses. Their passion is an expression of their anger at injustice. Poets speak of their passionate love for the beloved. In the Operation Christmas Child clip we saw this morning Oksana Nelson spoke about her adoptive parent's question: "Why do we feel so passionate about this child?" They had a God-given, passionate love for Oksana even before they met her.

In the passage we're going to read this morning we encounter both meanings of the word "passion" at play in Jesus' life. We're going to see his passionate love for worship and his passionate anger at the abuse of worship. And we're going to see how his suffering and death, his Passion, enables us to worship God in a new way.

I invite you this morning to view Jesus' passion for worship but I warn you, once you see it, once it touches you, you might never be the same again! Annie Dillard, a Christian poet, wrote something that arrested my attention years ago. The picture she painted of worship and the potential it holds fixed itself in my mind and heart and every now and then, it rises up and disturbs me. It works in my spirit as if Jesus were walking through the temple of my heart and upsetting my tables and forcing me to ask myself: "Am I taking worship seriously or am I just playing at it?" She wrote...

Why do we people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute? ...

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On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning.

It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.²

There is a question I want us to reflect on as we encounter God's Word this morning. I'd like this question to be running in the background of our minds as we meet Jesus in the Word this morning. The question is this:

If Jesus came among us during worship today, what would he do?

Let me personalize the question, because I must. The question needs to hit home within our own hearts.

If Jesus sat beside you in worship today, what would he do?

With those questions in mind, let's read God's Word together this morning. I'm reading from John's Gospel, chapter two, verses thirteen to twenty-two. This is God's holy, inspired and authoritative Word. Let's listen to it with open ears and responsive hearts.

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money-changers sitting there. 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. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

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. ²² When therefore he was raised from the

² Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (Harper Perennial, 1988), p. 52. I posted 8/20/2007
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dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

First of all, I want us to consider **what Jesus' passion for worship tells us about him.** Everything that John has written in this Gospel is intended to reveal something about Jesus to us. The purpose of this Gospel is to demonstrate that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and to invite us to believe in him so that we might receive the gift of eternal life. There is something in this story that reveals an aspect of Jesus' identity as "the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus' passion for worship reveals His union with the Father

"do not make my Father's house a house of trade." John 2:16

Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem just before the Passover festival. John is very careful to note the Jewish festivals and this is the first of three Passover seasons that intersect Jesus' life and ministry. Passover was the highest of the high holidays and Jerusalem was packed with worshipers.

At Passover the Jewish people remembered God's deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Every year in the spring, in the month of Abib, the head of each home sacrificed a lamb at the temple, offering its blood as a burnt sacrifice and then taking the carcass home to eat it with his family. It was a combination of a sacrifice offered to God and a feast shared as a family ... somewhat similar to our Thanksgiving season that combines thanks to God with family banquets. But the Jewish people were required by God's Law to go to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover; they could not remain in their towns.

**"You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, but at the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the Lord your God will choose."
Deuteronomy 16:5-7**

Jerusalem was God's chosen place of worship and so Jesus, obedient to his Father's command, went up to worship and celebrate with family and friends. But what he saw in the temple broke his heart! As one Bible scholar put it...

Instead of solemn dignity and the murmur of prayer, there is the bellowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep. Instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is noisy commerce.³

³D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 179.



The temple complex in Jerusalem had a large courtyard that surrounded the temple enclosure. In order to get into the inner area for worship everyone had to pass through this courtyard, stepping over the piles of animal dung that were collecting, side-stepping the oxen and sheep that were being sold there for pilgrim's to offer as sacrifices in the temple for Passover. And once they were inside the temple enclosure, the bleating and bellowing of the animals followed them. The entire temple area had the sight and the smell and the sound of a stock yard ... no offense intended to the cattlemen of our church! It's just that we would never hold an open air worship service right next to a stockyard. And the temple was an open air worship venue. Everyone, except the high priest, stood outside the temple and worshipped.

There wasn't anything wrong with the animal business. It needed to be done. Just not in the temple! The Law of God declared that no one could appear before the Lord without a sacrifice and so these animals were being sold as a service to the pilgrims, many of whom had travelled many miles to come to Jerusalem for Passover. They couldn't bring animals from home with them, so they had to buy them in Jerusalem. But it didn't need to be done in the temple courtyard! The atmosphere of reverence and prayer that should have marked worship in the temple was being completely overwhelmed by the bawling and the bellowing of the stock.

The traditional interpretation of Jesus' action is that he was angry because people were being cheated in the exchange on their money. I don't think that's why Jesus turned over the tables. I think he was simply saying that the atmosphere of worship was being replaced by the atmosphere of commerce. Jesus said...

“Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” John 2:16

Jesus priority was worship and worship was losing out to business. Worship was becoming secondary to business and brothers and sisters...

Whenever the worship of God becomes secondary to anything in our lives, that thing has become a god to us!

We can be engaged in idolatry as we sit there this morning. Instead of exalting God we can be thinking about our next home renovation project or our upcoming vacation. We can be worried about how our investments are doing, where our health is going or planning the menu for our family get-together. While we sing words of praise to God we can be wondering about what people think of our new outfit or wondering whether or not that cute guy is going to ask you out. If Jesus sat down beside you right now; what would he have to chase out of your life so that the worship of God would become your priority?



Jesus gathered together some cords and made a whip out of them. The cords were made of bulrushes so they didn't have a lot of striking power; it wasn't a bullwhip or a "cat o' nine-tails." But the power behind the whip was not the sting of the lash but the moral power of the Son of Man. As one Bible scholar wrote: "It was surely the blazing anger of the selfless Christ rather than the weapon he carried which really cleared the Temple Courts of its noisy, motley throng."⁴

Many people struggle with the picture of an angry Jesus. "How can this be 'Jesus meek and mild.?' " Well, it isn't. It's the righteous anger of the Son of Man who one day will stand as the Righteous Judge of all the earth; it's the righteous anger of God against hypocritical, idolatrous worship. Jesus' anger was his passionate outrage against the injustice being done to the worship of His Father. And in his passionate anger he mirrored his Father's outrage at false worship. The Law of God decreed...

"You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth." Deuteronomy 6:14-15

False worship ignited the passionate anger of Jesus because the honor and glory of his Father was under attack. But please don't think that Jesus' passionate anger was divorced from his love for His Father. In fact, it was his love for His Father that fuelled his anger. Every one of us here today understands that connection. If we saw or heard one of our beloved family members attacked or slandered by someone, our anger would be incited because the one we love is being injured. Jesus and the Father were so united that an insult to the one, was an attack on the other. Pastor Kent Hughes points out that...

the ultimate source of our Lord's anger was love—the love of God. As his disciples were standing there dumbfounded at their Lord, possibly while he was still breathing hard after driving the men out, the whip still in his hand, the Spirit brought Psalm 69:9 to the mind of one of the disciples. That Psalm is about David but had prophetic fulfillment in Christ.

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

The word "consume" in Greek means to be eaten up ... The Hebrew word for "consume" means "in a flame." Jesus was consumed with zeal for God's glory and his house. The full meaning of this word can be seen in the second half of Psalm 69:9...

⁴ H.E.W. Turner, as quoted in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 194



“and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.” Psalm 69:9

David and our Savior identified so closely with God that when someone defamed the Lord, they too were defamed. What a wonderful thought for all of us—to be so identified with God and so in love with him that when his name is defamed or his glory somehow tarnished, we feel it and experience that same holy anger.⁵

But for Jesus there was a unique sense of identification and throughout his Gospel John will return again and again to the identity of the Son as intertwined with that of the Father. Jesus said...

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” John 5:19

When Jesus marched through the temple court, brandishing the whip and driving out the traders, you can take it that the Father was doing it through the Son. The action people saw in Jesus was birthed in the will of the Father.

Jesus said...

“whoever sees me sees him who sent me.” John 12:45

“I and the Father are one.” John 10:30

Jesus the Son and God the Father share the same passion for worship and we see that passion in this story. Later in the Gospel Jesus engages a woman in conversation and their banter drifts towards matters of worship. The people of her community worshipped outside of the temple in Jerusalem, a fact that she noted was contrary to the commandments of Jesus’ Jewish faith. Jesus announces to her that a day was coming when it would not matter where someone worshipped. Jesus said...

“the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23-24

We’ll look more intensively at this passage in a future message, but I want to highlight two things for us today.

⁵R. Kent Hughes, *John : That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1999), 70.



First of all, notice Jesus' declaration that the Father is "seeking" "true worshippers." The Father is passionate about true worship! The Father is seeking worshippers who set Him and Him alone as the object of their adoration. He's looking for worshippers who are drawn to praise because of their love for Him and his truth. He's looking for passionate worshippers because he is passionate about worship.

Are you passionate about the worship of God? Am I? Does a flame for God burn within your heart? Does "zeal" for his worship, his honour and his glory consume me? If not, are we ready to turn over the tables and drive out the distractions that have taken God's place in our hearts? Are we ready to be done with the "business" of religion and return to the "true" worship of our God?

The second thing I want to highlight for us today is Jesus' declaration that "the hour is coming, and is now here." Jesus was announcing a change in worship, a whole new day for praise was dawning. Notice the word "hour." We encountered that word last week at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother asked him to do something about the wine problem and Jesus said to her...

"My hour has not yet come." John 2:4

What did Jesus mean by his "hour"? As Jesus prepared for the cross he declared to his disciples...

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." John 12:23-24

And Jesus prayed to his Father...

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." John 12:27-28

What was "the hour"? It was Jesus' hour of destiny with a cross in Jerusalem. It was Jesus' hour of his resurrection from the dead. Jesus' "hour" is the moment around which all of human history pivots ... his death and resurrection. His hour was his Passion.

Not only was Jesus passionate about worship, but...

Jesus' Passion opens a temple in which we can worship the Father

"he was speaking about the temple of his body." John 2:21



The religious leaders of the temple demanded that Jesus justify his actions. They wanted a “sign,” some kind of miraculous act that would prove that God was with him. Jesus answered them...

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 2:19

The religious leaders, as well as his disciples, misunderstood what Jesus meant. They thought he was referring to the temple in Jerusalem. The building had taken forty-six years to raise, and it wasn’t even finished yet! It would take another forty years before the temple in Jerusalem was completed. How could Jesus raise it up in just three days! Preposterous!

But Jesus’ resurrection changed everything. After Jesus death and resurrection his disciples remembered what he’d said that day and finally understood what Jesus meant...

“he was speaking about the temple of his body.” John 2:21

When Jesus challenged the religious leaders to “destroy this temple,” he was predicting that they were going to put him to death. And they did. Within three years their plotting and planning bore fruit in the death of Jesus on a cross at the hands of Roman executioners. Jesus death did away with the animal sacrifices that had been the heart of temple worship in Jerusalem. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus...

“entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:12

We can come to God without bringing a sacrifice of our own; the final sacrifice has been made. We come to God bearing the sacrifice of Jesus as our own. Jesus died for us and access to God is ours in him!

And three days later Jesus rose from the dead. Of all the signs that John records in his Gospel that prove that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of God,” this one was the greatest! Jesus is alive! That is a wonderful truth and we’re going to look at that in greater detail in future messages as we make our way through the Gospel.

But my question today is: **Why does Jesus refer to his body as “the temple”?**

Well, let’s understand what a temple is. It’s a place where God dwells. It’s a place where people meet with God. In the temple in Jerusalem there was a special room inside the temple where God’s visible presence on earth could be seen. When the temple in Jerusalem was dedicated by Solomon and the priests, it tells us that God’s presence came down upon that place and...



“the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.” 1 Kings 8:11

God was present in the temple and by calling himself “the temple” Jesus was saying: **“God is here! If you want to meet God, meet him in me! You don’t need to go to Jerusalem; you simply need to come to Me!”**

John began his Gospel by declaring of Jesus...

“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 1:14

Worship is no longer about “where” we worship, or even about “how” we worship; it’s about “Who” we worship. We meet God in Jesus the Christ, Son of God, and the resurrected Jesus is a movable Temple. Wherever He is, God is present. Jesus opens heaven for us through his death and resurrection!

Let me remind us of something we saw two weeks ago in John’s unfolding story of Jesus. We need to pull some things together in minds that John intends us to connect together. This story of Jesus’ cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem and the story of his turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee that some just before it both follow Jesus’ declaration to Nathanael...

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” John 1:51

Heaven is opened for us in Jesus Christ. He is our temple. Whenever his people are gathered in his name, he is present. The Apostle Paul tells us that as his body here on earth, indwelt by his Spirit, the church of Jesus Christ is a temple where God can be met.

For through [Jesus] we ... have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are ... a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:18-22

I asked us to think about two questions this morning:

If Jesus came among us during worship today, what would he do?

If Jesus sat beside you in worship today, what would he do?

But there’s something wrong with those questions. Do you know what it is? **Brothers and sisters, there is no “if”!**

Jesus is here! God is here! And with Jacob we can say...



“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” Genesis 28:16-17

Because Jesus is here! The Word of God declares it to be so! And the right question for us to ask is...

Because Jesus came among us during worship today, what will we do?

And more to the point...

Because Jesus sat beside me in worship today, what will I do?

Let's talk with him. I invite you to a few moments of quiet prayer and communion with Jesus. Ask him show you those things that have taken priority in your life over him and allow him to remove them from your life. Commitment yourself to making and keeping him the focus of your life and your worship.

[quietly play “Take My Life & Let It Be”]

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** Take My Life & Let It Be (#597)
- **Benediction**