2012_03_11 (Passion 3) Sermon - Ascension Batavia

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 2:13-22 (NKJV)

13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." 18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews 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 of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

A TEMPLE RAISED UP

In Jesus Name, who has raised us up to be with Him in heaven, dear fellow redeemed,

In Scripture, the temple of God is associated with God's presence among His people. Where does God dwell? Where does God speak to His people? Where does He visit them, rebuke them, and comfort them? All these questions help us get a handle on what the Bible is often indicating when it makes references like the Temple, God's house, the dwelling place of the Most High.

When Israel corrupts the physical Temple in Jerusalem, they are guilty of corrupting the holy place of God, the place where He dwells. But this goes far beyond the physical walls of the complex Jesus enters in our text. God is always after more important things than externals like where you worship, what you look like, or what church you are externally a member of. He is concerned firstly with what the status of His spiritual dwelling place is. What is in our hearts? The Temple of God is among His people where ever the word is taught purely, the gospel preached, and the Sacraments shared. The Temple of God is among those who believe in our Lord Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. The Temple of God is something constructed not with the hands of man, but with the hands of God. May the Spirit bless our study as we consider *A Temple Raised Up*.

1. Temple Worship – Destroyed

Man's structures vs. God's structures. How do they compare? God creates a world without sin, flawless before His eyes. What do we do? We bring sin into this world. We pollute, corrupt, and destroy what was once beautiful. We try to build, restore, and preserve – but despite all efforts, man's structures and efforts just do not last.

Jesus calls the Temple in Jerusalem "My Father's house." In the Old Testament this was meant to be the place where God would meet with His people – His house. This was the place where God dwelt within His Word – where His Word was preached, where sacrifices were made so that the people could be assured of their forgiveness through the promised sacrifice of Christ.

The Passover festival likewise centered around the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is joining His fellow Jews in this annual journey to take part in this festival. A Lamb, spotless, was to be offered up and the blood placed on the doorpost as the Lord "passed over" His people with mercy and forgiveness. The Temple was to be a place of worship where sins are confessed and forgiveness is received. However this true spiritual worship was lost among the Jews in our text. The Temple was being destroyed.

<u>v.14-16</u> – The money changers and animal vendors were not something unusual to find in Jerusalem, especially at the time of the Passover. Jews would journey from all over the world and many of them either did not have livestock for sacrifice or could not bring them for such a long distance. When they got to Jerusalem, they would need to purchase a dove or ox for sacrifice. They would need these money changers to convert their foreign coin to Temple coin in order to pay the Temple tax.

The fact that there was such business going on in Jerusalem was not the real issue. The problem was that they had set up market in the Temple. The Temple, as we said already, was to be solely a place of worship, not a place of business. The priests and religious leaders should not have let this happen.

But what about the convenience of it? Consider our church. There are a lot more convenient ways we could run this organization. There are a lot of ways we could make ourselves more financially secure. Yes the destruction of God's Temple is just as much a danger for us today as it was there for the Jews in Jesus' day.

We are easily tempted into making this house of God a house of merchandise. It would be easy to bring the business model into our church. Think of our budget for instance. How much easier might it be if our budget was based on you income. Perhaps we could just set up a percentage that required of each member. Perhaps this is a requirement of membership? If you wish to be a member, you must set up a direct deposit account and every week "x" \$\$ is taken out of your bank account. But where is the love, the free will gospel giving in this sort of budgetary approach?

There are a lot more convenient ways we could run this church. Think of how mutually beneficial it would be to partner with other churches and other local businesses to raise funds. – advertising, dinners, insurance packages, food drives, bake sales, coupons ... When it comes to financing is very tempting to begin shaping the church into something more like the world ... to bring the moneychangers and the animal vendors inside ...

Favoring convenience led to a lethargic spirit among the people. It was just about going through the motions rather than thinking about what worship really means. It was about in and out, change your money, offer your dove, and back to home again.

But earthly convenience is not what Temple worship is all about. <u>v.17</u>. Temple worship is about zeal for our Father's presence among us. Jesus quotes Psalm 69 which we used in our Introit earlier. Psalm 69 goes on . . . "the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." Notice, He did not do this discretely. He made a scene., knowing full well that the reproaches would fall upon Him. He was challenging the religious leaders. The reproaches that would fall on Jesus were more than mere words – they would take Jesus to the cross.

The destruction of true Temple worship led to the destruction of our Lord's body.

2. Our Lord's Body – Destroyed

<u>v.18-21</u> – They just didn't get it. Rather than realizing what was wrong with this scenario they asked for more from Jesus – a sign. They were asking Him by what authority he was able to challenge the practice of religious leaders. The blindness that led to destroying Temple worship led to destroying the temple of our Lord's body on the cross – just as our Lord predicted.

Have you ever had that project which just never seems to go right? You are baking a cake for instance, but you measured the ingredients wrong and you know it. Yet you are 3/4ths of the way through the recipe. It's 11:00 at night and you're tired. Do you just finish the cake and serve it to your guests tomorrow? What's the only thing you can do? Scrap it.

Every effort we have made on our own to offer something worth while to our Lord is missing something. Every time we try to come to God to make up for our sins, every time we think in terms of being pretty good, a good Christian, better than the next guy who doesn't go to church at all – we leave something out of the recipe. This is what we read about in our Epistle reading from 1 Corinthians 1 – 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Our wisdom will never be good enough. Our works, our life always leaves God with a bad tasting cake.

What man has corrupted had to be destroyed in order for something good to be raised up. 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 (NKJV) — 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. The only way a pure temple could be constructed for our God to dwell in, was if our efforts were scrapped and a new Temple was raised up. The zeal Jesus had for His Father's house led Him to this end. He took our corruption, our lack of love for our Father's house, and our despiteful attitudes upon Himself. As Peter says, He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you are healed (1Peter 2:4).

For this the Passover Lamb was sacrificed. When His body was destroyed, Your sins were destroyed.

3. Our Lord's Body - Raised Up

All this was done so that a new Temple could be built. All this so that God could declare victory over your sins, over the grave, over your death. (v.19) It took King Herod the Great some forty-six years thus far to finance the reconstruction of the physical Temple in Jerusalem. But nothing man could do, not in forty-six years, not in a thousand, could restore what was destroyed by sin. Our Savior had given Himself over to the payment of sin – destruction and eternal death. Only our Savior God could overcome this. John 10:18 (NKJV) — 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

What man destroys, God raises up. And He does not construct like man constructs. When God builds, He makes it last. Our Savior's risen body and victory over sin is eternal. God finally has something acceptable. Romans 6:9 (NKJV) — 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

True love, perfect works, and everlasting faithfulness has been raised up in Christ. This has all become ours so that we stand, a new Temple, built with Christ's works and not our own.

4. Temple Worship – Raised Up

In raising up the Temple of Our Lord's Body, we also find ourselves raised up. We find ourselves given new life. Romans chapter 6 describes us as buried with Him through baptism into death . . . for if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be united with His resurrection . . . Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. This Resurrection of our Lord now becomes our own through faith. We find new life in our own Temple Worship. Chapter 12 of Romans describes our bodies now as a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." Cleansed from sin, God has raised us up a new Temple, from death into life.

This means that we now can offer up sacrifices from the heart – living sacrifices. We can worship today our of love and honesty. We are motivated in our offerings not by convenience or financial smarts, but by seeing the great sacrifice that our Lord offered up for us.

Yes we still use a budget, but not as a constraint or demand, but as you own offering. It is for this church our own expectation for the gospel work we wish to do this year. Nothing, absolutely nothing is demanded of us from God. He has set us free from tithing and the constraint of the Law. Our Temple worship is now about freely giving out of thanksgiving to our Lord.

Notice the difference between the Jews reaction to Jesus' words and His disciples reaction. The Jews ask a sign. The disciples accept His word. (v.22). When Jesus speaks He speaks from Scripture. We can trust what He says. His resurrection proves your resurrection. His new life guarantees your new life, both hidden within you right now and the fullness of life in the world to come.

We read of this in our Old Testament reading from Amos (9:11) – On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down.

God has restored what is holy. He has rebuilt His Temple through our Lord's resurrection. Our Father is present among us in His Word. He is teaching, admonishing, caring, and rebuilding us through His word. The zeal for our Father's house which what in Jesus is among us also. Let us rejoice and be glad, for God has raised up His Temple. In Jesus Name. Amen.