

The title for today's message is: **What Were They Thinking?**

Jesus said: ***"Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our Gospel lesson for today, we find Jesus about the business of disrupting and cleansing the temple in Jerusalem.

As well as why Jesus and His disciples are in Jerusalem at this time. John said they were there to celebrate the Passover feast.

Where told that people from all over, were coming into Jerusalem to worship, and to offer their sacrifices to God.

And since many were not able to bring their own animals for a sacrifice, they would purchase the animals they needed right there in Jerusalem.

Now, in addition to acquiring the animals they needed, They would also need to have their money changed into the local currency in order to pay Temple taxes.

So as you can see, during this Passover feast, there was an abundance of people who came to Jerusalem making it a very crowded place.

Therefore making it necessary for many people to sell animals, and change money.

But sadly the practice of selling animals, and money changing had become corrupt, the visitors were being ripped off, taken advantage of.

These business people had gone too far, they were in affect taking advantage of God, by setting up their business in the courtyards of the temple.

The temple now took on the appearance of a State Fair; complete with advertising, vendors, and stinky animal pins.

Under these circumstances it became difficult, if not impossible, for many to think about worship, let alone their relationship with God.

When Jesus saw this, there's no wonder He became greatly disturbed. John tells us that Jesus made a whip, and drove out all the animal vendors.

He overturned the tables of the money changers, scattering their coins all over the ground.

All the while Jesus said: ***do not make my Father's house a house of trade.***” Another words; What were they thinking

Everyone knew the temple was a place where people would go to worship, pray and make their sacrifices.

The temple was also the place where God had promised to meet, and remain with His people.

But how does this apply to us here today, since there is no longer a temple? That is, a temple for offering up burnt sacrifices.

With the coming of Jesus Christ it was no longer necessary to offer up sacrifices as a way to approach God.

Today we have the church, a place where we come to worship and praise God, and to share our walk with the Lord, together.

Besides its through Jesus that we approach God now. And its through Jesus that we receive forgiveness, and atonement.

So where is God's house in our time? Some would suggest that it is church buildings; they say there the modern version of the temple.

Not so. Sure there the place we come to worship, but in truth, the temple of today, the place wherein God dwells, is within our hearts, and minds.

The Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians chapter 3: ***"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's Temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"***

And in I Corinthians chapter 6 he says: ***"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?"***

And finally in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 he says: ***We are the temple of the Living God***

So we are God's temple. But of course, that leads us to a question. What kind of stuff do you have stored up in God's temple? Is there a lot of junk?

Is this junk in your life, preventing you from really living with God? After all you are God's temple, right?

Or, have you become a temple for something else? For such things like, sinful attitudes, and behaviors. Think hard now, its very important.

Are there things in your life, that now hinder your relationship with the Lord? Are you being honest in day to day business? Or have you been dishonest?

Are you having sex outside of marriage? Are you messing around with pornography?

And our children, do they honor their father and Mother? Or do they dishonor them, thinking their parents are stupid and they are smart?

Is this what your temple has become? A sanctuary for bad thoughts against God, and others?

If so, your body, your life, must be cleansed! You might say, "Wait a minute, we know how Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem.

Is God going to bring the same anger against us? Do we think we could bear it?"

But you're forgetting something. Remember, you are God's temple! Jesus wasn't angry at the temple! He didn't go, and whip the walls of the temple!

He was angry at the unsavory characters, who had taken up residence in the temple. That's where His anger was directed.

He was angry at all the junk, that was preventing people from using the temple for what it was meant to be used for.

He was angry with the sinful attitudes, and behaviors, that were preventing the people from being in fellowship with God.

He doesn't want to punish you. He loves you, and He wants to help you. He wants to give you peace, and life everlasting.

He wants all people, to be free from all the junk that has gathered in them. And this can happen by the cleansing power, of Jesus Christ.

But you say, "well, my sinful attitudes, and behaviors, are part of me. I have been a willing accomplice to the havoc my junk has caused.

So you really are guilty, and should be punished" Its true, you have been a willing accomplice. You yourself have collected and gathered this junk.

But that is the brilliance, and love of our Lord. Our loving Lord, Has made a way to keep, and redeem men, and woman, while getting rid of the junk.

Look, you wouldn't burn your house down, just because its filled with junk. Instead you get rid of the junk, and redeem the house.

What you're feeling, is guilt over your sins. But rest assured, your guilt is taken away by Jesus Christ.

That's right the one who was whipped, stripped, beaten and crucified, for the guilt of our sins.

This is Jesus. He was zealous for you, and for me. So zealous that He was willing to be consumed in order to redeem us.

So, don't be afraid of the cleansing that Jesus would like to do in your life. It's really something that is very exciting; even exhilarating.

It's like having a dumpster outside your house. It's a wonderful opportunity to clean up your house, and actually live for a change.

You can live with the Lord! You can live more simply. You can live more lightly, and you can live with hope.

When Jesus went to the cross, He was carrying the junk in our lives, why? so that we could become God's holy habitation; His Temple.

Its important that you, and all people, accept the fact that there is someone in heaven who loves you with a pure, and unadulterated love.

A love that is free from self-interest, and is expressed in self-sacrifice. Through the prophets, even before Jesus was born, it was said, ***"Zeal for your house will consume me."***

You can live in freedom, and without guilt; and with no small amount of joy either. And here's what's really great.

The Lord wants you to have the joy of helping in this. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 4:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Did you get that? You and I and all people who believe, get to actually take part in giving all our junk, the old heave ho.

We get to take our sinful behaviors, and attitudes, lift them up, and over, as we hear that gratifying crashing sound, as they go flying into the dumpster.

Now we hear the sound of peace as we start anew. My friends, there is much Joy, in cleaning house.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.