

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 2.13-25



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 2.13-25
Copyright 2017 T. M. Moore
Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All psalms for singing adapted from The Ailbe Psalter. All quotations from Church Fathers from Ancient Christian Commentary Series IV a and b: John, edited by Joel C. Elowsky, General Editor Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006. Verse translation of John by T. M. Moore.

Introduction to *John 2.13-25*

In the first part of John 2 we see Jesus thoughtful, considerate, and very much in the background. In Jerusalem, we see another side of Jesus, one animated for the honor of His Father's house.

In Jerusalem for the Passover, Jesus is disturbed by the way the religious leaders have allowed this most important feast to become an occasion for profit-making. His actions in the temple create quite a stir, and John uses the interaction between Jesus and religious leaders to point us forward to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Here we see Jesus in an entirely new light. He is the Messiah to be loved and followed. But He is also the Lord to be feared.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfígell*, and our worldview newsletter *The Week*.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 A Place of Merchandise

Read and meditate on John 2.13, 14.

Like other faithful Jews of His day, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover. At this first Passover of His public ministry, Jesus dared the Jews to tear down the temple. At His last Passover visit, they would do just that, but only so that the promise He declared at *this* Passover could be fulfilled.

¹³Now when the Passover of the Jews was near, then Jesus went to Jerusalem, ¹⁴and there He found within the temple many who were selling oxen, sheep, and doves unto the pilgrims who had come to worship – and the money-changers, working at their stand.

- John 2.13, 14

Reflect

1. Review Exodus 12.1-30, which reports the institution of Passover. How should this early mention of Passover affect our reading of the story of the Lamb of God? Complete this prayer: *Thank You, Lord, that because of Your sacrifice, my sins have not only been passed over, but...*

2. What's going on here in the temple? What were these people doing? Does this seem particularly vile and wicked to you? Explain. *Help me to see the world with Your eyes, Lord, or...*

3. All these stalls, kiosks, and tables, ostensibly provided for the convenience of those coming for Passover, were an opportunity for profit, both by those who engaged in the selling and other transactions, and probably those who licensed the spaces to them. But what about this was so wrong? Do we do things like this in our churches today? *Lord, buying and selling and making a profit aren't bad things, but...*

4. These merchants were making of Israel's most sacred holy day an opportunity for profit. By appealing to people's *convenience* – after all, who wants to lug a sacrifice to Jerusalem when you can buy one once you get there? – and *necessity* – the temple merchants only accepted cash, and only *local* cash – these merchants contrived to wish “Happy Holidays!” to all their clients, but especially to themselves. What was in the minds of the people who purchased from these merchants? Do you suppose their practice of Passover was in any way affected by all this commerce? Explain. *Lord, it's so easy to let our holy days become...*

5. God had a purpose for instituting the Passover, and it did not please Him that others were glomming on to His purpose for *their own* purposes. What does this suggest about how we celebrate the holy days of our faith? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“After recording the testimony borne by John the Baptist to Jesus and mentioning that he went into Galilee at the time when he turned the water into wine, and after he has also noticed the sojourn of a few days in Capernaum, John proceeds to tell us that he went up to Jerusalem at the season of the Jews' Passover, and when he had made a scourge of small cords, drove out of the temple those who were selling in it. This makes it evident that this act was performed by the Lord not on a single occasion but twice over; but that only the first instance is put on record by John, and the last by the other three.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

The work of our Lord Jesus is set squarely in the culture and times of Judea under Roman rule. Jesus will manage to provoke all the powers-that-be to oppose Him, because He had this uncanny knack of knowing what they were about and making them look bad to the crowds. What better way to make His presence known than to begin His public ministry at the Passover, making a mess of the mess the Jews had made of this most sacred holy day? Do holy days still matter? Have we compromised them at all?

Closing Prayer

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”
Our feet have been standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem is built
As a city that is compact together,
Where the tribes go up,
The tribes of the LORD,
To the Testimony of Israel,
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.
For thrones are set there for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
Prosperity within your palaces.”
For the sake of my brethren and companions,
I will now say, “Peace *be* within you.”
Because of the house of the Lord our God
I will seek your good.

Psalm 122

Psalm 122 (*Nettleton: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

I was glad when they said to me, “To the Lord’s house let us go!”
Holy City, let our feet be firmly planted in your soil.
Jesus builds His Church forever, where His people sing His praise!
As Your Word decrees forever, we will thank You all our days.

On the throne of David, Jesus sits to judge the nations all.
As our holy peace increases, we are safe who on You call.
Grant us peace, Lord, by Your favor; for Your people’s sake we pray.
For the Church’s sake, O Savior, we will seek Your good today.

2 A Little Kingdom Violence

Read and meditate on John 2.15.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God comes with violence, and He was right. He was right at this first Passover, and He was right at the last one He attended. And in many ways, He is right still.

¹⁵He made a whip of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, tearing down each stall and pouring out the money that He found, and turning all their tables upside-down.

- John 2.15

Reflect

1. This was real violence on Jesus' part, but its main aim was symbolic. Meditate on Matthew 11.12 and Luke 16.16. What kind of "violence" should we associate with seeking and entering the Kingdom of God? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I pray with John Donne: "Batter my heart!" Beat, bend, and shape me for Your Kingdom, Lord, so that...*
2. Put yourself on the receiving end of this mayhem. How would *you* have felt about what Jesus did here? Should we expect Jesus to go out of His way *not* to offend people? Should we? Explain. *Lord, I know that truth is more important than...*
3. Was Jesus attacking the practice of doing business in this situation? What *was* He attacking? What did He want the people observing Him to understand about why He did this? Can you think of anything that might be a modern day equivalent of what Jesus did here? *Lord, are there buyers and sellers and money-changers in my soul? Am I in any way...*
4. This situation raises questions of justice. We know that Jesus never sinned. But some people were bruised, some lost valuable merchandise, and others probably lost some money, as eager bystanders grabbed the coins thrown wildly to the ground. Why is this *not* an act of *injustice* on Jesus' part? *Lord, I know that in the Kingdom, some things take priority over others. For example, today in my own life...*
5. Meditate on John 16.8-11 and Hebrews 12.3-11. If Jesus were to stride into the temple of your soul, and find things not entirely as they ought to be, what sort of *violence* do you suppose He might unleash against you? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Nevertheless, in order to seek the mystery of the deed in the figurative meaning, who are they who sell the oxen? Who are they who sell the sheep and doves? They are those who seek their own interests in the church rather than those of Jesus Christ. Those who have no desire for redemption have everything for sale. They do not want to be bought; they want to sell. Yet surely it is for their good that they be redeemed by the blood of Christ so that they may attain the peace of Christ. For what profit is there in acquiring anything temporal or transitory in this world—whether it be money, or gorging oneself on food or achieving high honors from your fellow human beings? Are not all

things smoke and wind? Do not all things pass on in a moment? And woe to those who want to hang on to passing things, for they pass with them!" *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus is the sworn Enemy of self-interest, especially when self-interest tries to take advantage of God's purposes for its own ends. Do we see any of this in our churches today? Should we respond with a kind of *violence* of our own?

Closing Prayer

Remember this, *that* the enemy has reproached, O LORD,
And *that* a foolish people has blasphemed Your name.
Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast!
Do not forget the life of Your poor forever.
Have respect to the covenant;
For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty.
Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed!
Let the poor and needy praise Your name.
Arise, O God, plead Your own cause;
Remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily.
Do not forget the voice of Your enemies;
The tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually.

Psalm 74.18-23

Psalm 74.10, 11, 18-21 (*Rockingham Old: O Lord Most High, with All My Heart*)

How long, O Lord, must they prevail who mock and spurn Your holy Name!
Why stay Your hand? Deploy it now, and bring Your foes to lasting shame!

Remember this, O Lord, our God: a foolish people spurns Your Name;
Deliver not Your flock to them, nor leave Your holy ones to shame.

Your covenant, recall, renew, for violence spreads throughout the earth;
The poor and needy, rescue, Lord, and we shall sing Your matchless worth!

3 Not in My Father's House!

Read and meditate on John 2.16, 17.

We've all seen those athletes boasting about how they intend to defend their "house" against anyone who tries to get a victory there: "Not in my house!" I suppose such zeal is laudable. How much more laudable is Jesus' zeal for *His Father's* house! And what about us?

¹⁶*He said to those who sold the doves, "Now take these things away from here! And do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"*

¹⁷*(His followers would remember with surprise that it was written: "Zeal consumes Me for My Father's house.")*

- John 2.16, 17

Reflect

1. I get the impression Jesus not only intended to create some chaos, but to *clear the temple* of this practice, at least for the present. He meant for the temple precincts not only to be *disturbed*, but *cleansed*. Is there a lesson here for any sin Jesus might find in our hearts? Complete this prayer: *Search me, O Lord, and know my thoughts and my heart, and...*

2. Jesus was said to have *zeal* for His Father's house. What kind of affection is *zeal*? What would it look like for us to have zeal for the Lord's house? *Our Father in heaven, all around You everything cries, "Glory!" (Ps. 29.9) How can I show zeal for You and for Your house today, when I...*

3. John opened his gospel with a barrage of bold statements about Who Jesus is. Can you recall them all? Beginning at the end of chapter 1, he begins to bolster those claims in a variety of ways, laying down a track of allusions and referents. First, seeing Nathanael from afar, and appropriating Jacob's vision for Himself. Then water to wine. Now this reference to Psalm 69.9. Look up Psalm 69.5-10. What about that psalm would have caused John and the others to recall this incident? *Show Me, Lord, in all of Scripture, how You...*

4. Jesus said, "My Father's house..." Why didn't He say, "Our Father's house?" Was He claiming something specific about Himself? Or trying to get people to think of Him in some special way? *I know You, Jesus, to be the Son of God because...*

5. What does Jesus suggest in this incident about what it takes to keep God's "house" in proper working order? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"He did not merely 'cast them out' but also 'overturned the tables' and 'poured out the money,' so that they could see how someone who threw himself into such danger for the good order of the house could never despise his master. If he had acted out of hypocrisy, he would have only advised them, but to place himself in such danger was very daring. It was no small thing to offer himself to the anger of so many market people or to excite against himself a most brutal mob of petty dealers

by his reproaches and the disruption he caused. This was not, in other words, the action of a pretender but of one choosing to suffer everything for the order of the house.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Do you ever feel like a “pretender” about your faith? How does Jesus’ action in this situation counsel us to be not pretenders, but ready sufferers for the Gospel and our King?

Closing Prayer

Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works
Which You have done;
And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
If I would declare and speak *of them*,
They are more than can be numbered.
Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
Then I said, “Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart.”
I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness
In the great assembly;
Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,
O LORD, You Yourself know.
I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;
I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation;
I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth
From the great assembly.

Psalm 40.5-10

Psalm 40.4-10 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e’er compare.

Offrings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord.
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev’ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

Lord, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered ‘round.
Nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving Lord!

4 Destroy this Temple

Read and meditate on John 2.18, 19.

Jesus casts everything people know and understand in a new light, a light that emanates from Himself, the Light of life and Light of the world. We'll need a new idea about the dwelling-place of God, now that Jesus has come.

¹⁸And then the Jews stood forth and answered saying, "What sign do You show us, since You do these things, that we might know Your right to do so?"¹⁹Jesus then replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

- John 2.18, 19

Reflect

1. The Jews are looking for credentials: Who authorized this chaos? They demand a sign, which would indicate Jesus had some prophetic authorization to act as He did. But really, they demanded a sign so that they would have something to render a judgment about concerning Jesus. They were trying to establish themselves as authorized to judge Jesus' actions. They sought to make Jesus compliant to their agenda. Do we ever do anything like this? Do we ever try to get Jesus to do *our* bidding? Complete this prayer: *Lord, how can I know when I might be...*
2. The very mention of destroying the temple would stick in the craws of those Jewish leaders. The temple was Israel's most sacred place. Even to *think* about destroying it, much less to utter the idea publicly, was scandalous. They would make Jesus pay for that remark. But was Jesus talking about the temple in Jerusalem? Is there a sense of "dare ya" to Jesus' response? Does Jesus know what lies ahead for Him? Explain. *Lord, Yours is an indestructible life, and I share that life because I my life is hidden with You. Give me boldness today, Lord, so that...*
3. It is clear Jesus knows where all this is heading. Why should He mention this being raised up "in three days" at this early point in His ministry? And why did John think it was important to include at this point in his story? *Lord Jesus, You know everything. You know where my life is heading, so let me live my life...*
4. The Jews demanded a sign, and Jesus offered one. But they would have to wait for the outworking of that sign. Sometimes we must wait for the promises of the Lord as well. The Jews had to wait for this sign, but they missed it when it came. Why? What can we do, as we wait for the promises of the Lord, to make sure we don't miss anything He might be doing in our lives each day? *Show me Your glory, Lord, and let me realize Your promises as I...*
5. This whole incident is fraught with so many emotions. It has a comic element to it, even though it is a violent scene. Jesus' boldness and firmness create a sense of fear, while the demands of the Jews' and Jesus' response raise an ominous tone. How do these various affections contribute to our

understanding of and faith in Jesus? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“He then is eaten up with zeal for God’s house who desires to correct all that he sees wrong there. And if he cannot correct it, he endures and mourns.... Let the zeal for God’s house consume every Christian wherever he or she is a member.... In your house you busy yourself in trying to prevent things going wrong. In the house of God, where salvation is offered, ought you to be indifferent?... Do you have a friend? Admonish him gently; a wife or husband? Admonish them too.... Do what you are able, according to your station.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus often answered people’s questions in a way deliberately designed to confuse them, as we see here. Jesus lived and spoke and did what He did with a view to the glory He knew was coming later during His earthly sojourn. There is good advice in this for us (cf. 1 Jn. 3.1-3). Explain.

Closing Prayer

Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!
Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of Your name;
And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins,
For Your name's sake!
Why should the nations say,
“Where *is* their God?”

Psalm 79.8-10

Psalm 79.6-11 (*Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

Pour out, O Lord, Your wrath on all who deny Your Name;
Who trust You not nor seek You, bring down to deepest shame!
For they have with great rancor Your precious saints devoured;
Lay waste their habitation at this late dreadful hour.

Why should the nations mock and say, “Where now is their God?”
Let there be known among them harsh vengeance for our blood!
Hear, Lord, our groans and sighing; preserve us by Your pow’r,
For we are fairly dying each day and hour by hour.

5 The New Temple

Read and meditate on John 2.20-22.

They didn't know He was talking about His body? Wow! How could they have missed *that*? Of course they didn't know! Their mistake was in not knowing the Scripture nor the power of God (Matt. 22.29). As with John 1.51, brief statements like this show us how deeply immersed in Scripture Jesus was, and how Scripture permeated His thoughts, plans, and life. Read Isaiah 53, then immediately go on to Isaiah 54. No wonder Jesus thought of Himself as the new dwelling place of God!

²⁰The Jews said, "It has been now nearly fifty years since men began to build this temple, and You will in three days raise it up?" ²¹They did not know that He was speaking to them of His body. ²²His disciples would recall that He said this, when, later, He had risen from the dead. Then they believed the word which Jesus said, and all the Scriptures.

- John 2.20-22

Reflect

1. John is a master at sowing questions, pointing us ahead, and assuring us all along that everything's going to work out just fine. How do you see that here? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, You do all things well. You work all things together for the good of those who love You. Even the trials and difficulties I'll face today are...*
2. This passage illustrates what will be a major bone of contention between Jesus and His adversaries and detractors: He's always thinking in spiritual and eternal terms, while they're always thinking in self-centered, temporal, and material terms. They want Jesus to conform to their way of thinking and living. But He will have none of it. Jesus, you see, has His own agenda. Which agenda do you seem to follow most of the time? Explain. *Help me to see what You see, Lord, and to do what will contribute to...*
3. John mentions "when He had risen from the dead" as a *fait accompli*. It just came out as naturally as anything to him, because this was the reality he had come to know, and in which he lived. Are you as natural and at ease talking about Jesus and the resurrection as John seems to have been? Explain. *Lord Jesus, be in my mind, be in my heart, be my highest priority at all times, so that...*
4. Jesus has just made a spiritual statement. His interlocutors come back at Him with a temporal and material question. Jesus doesn't even respond. He just leaves them hanging. Do we *always* have to try to answer every challenge or objection, or satisfy someone's demand for a reason or explanation? Why or why not? *Lord, I'm usually not willing to risk having some objection or challenge to my faith come up. Today, give me boldness to...*

5. John mentions that he and the other disciples “believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.” He seems to put the Scripture and the words of Jesus on a par. Is he justified in doing this? Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“By the power to take his soul again and to raise the temple up, he declares himself God and the resurrection his own work: yet he refers all to the authority of his Father’s command. This is not contrary to the meaning of the apostle, when he proclaims Christ, the ‘power of God and the wisdom of God,’ thus referring all the magnificence of his work to the glory of the Father. For whatever Christ does, the power and the wisdom of God does.... Christ was raised from the dead by the working of God, for he himself worked the works of God the Father with a nature indistinguishable from God’s. And our faith in the resurrection rests on the God who raised Christ from the dead.” *Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315-367 AD)*

John has as much as said, “Here’s where all this is going: a temple will be destroyed, but a new one will be built, because Jesus is going to rise from the dead.” No details, no reason why, just enough of the end of the story to keep us reading. John the fisherman, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is an excellent story-teller. He gives us big bursts of revelation, then subtle hints and mysteries, followed by big action and confrontations, then foreshadowings and retrospectives. What can we learn from John the apostle about sharing the story of Jesus with others?

Closing Prayer

Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me;
Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel.
Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;
Shame has covered my face.
I have become a stranger to my brothers,
And an alien to my mother's children;
Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.
When I wept *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That became my reproach.
I also made sackcloth my garment;
I became a byword to them.
Those who sit in the gate speak against me,
And I *am* the song of the drunkards.
But as for me, my prayer *is* to You,
O LORD, in the acceptable time;
O God, *in* the multitude of Your mercy,
Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.
Deliver me out of the mire,
And let me not sink;
Let me be delivered from those who hate me,
And out of the deep waters.
Let not the floodwater overflow me,
Nor let the deep swallow me up;

And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.
Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness *is* good;
Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.

Psalm 69.6-16

Psalm 69.5-15 (*Greensleeves: What Child is This?*)

O God, our folly all You know, our wrongs from You are not hidden;
Let those who in Your mercy go not by our shame be smitten.
“Let none dishonored be because, O Lord, because of Me!
You make Me dishonor see; on Me reproach is written.”

O Lord, we make our prayers to You; receive our words, O Savior!
Let lovingkindness see us through, and answer us with favor!
Lord, lift us above the mire; deliv'rance is our one desire!
Let not the floods conspire to swallow us forever.

6 Know-It-All

Read and meditate on John 2.20-22.

No one likes a Know-it-All. Unless that Know-it-All is Jesus. But some people didn't like Him. Because knowing it all, Jesus knew too much – about them, their motives, and their evil hearts. He knows us, too.

²³Now when He was in Jerusalem for Passover, and when the people saw the signs which He had done, then many in His Name believed. ²⁴To none of them did Jesus trust Himself, for He knew every man, ²⁵and Jesus had no need for anyone to tell Him what was in the heart of man, for He knew every man.

- John 2.23-25

Reflect

1. Apparently, Jesus did other “signs” while He was in Jerusalem for the Passover. We don't know what they were, but many people who observed them “believed in His name.” As it turned out, though, how solid was this faith? What do these “many” seem actually to have believed? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, help me to believe in You, come what may, so that even when...*

2. Jesus did not *trust Himself* to these people. Why not? What did He know about them? Does what He knows about you lead Him to trust you? With what? *I want to have Your trust, Lord, so that...*

3. John makes a point of telling us twice that Jesus knew what was in every person. It's like he needed to say it twice so that it would have the desired effect. Meditate on Psalm 94.9-11. Could John have been cuing readers to recall this or similar passages of Scripture? Why? Does the Spirit of Jesus do that in your life? *Father, point me often to Your Word, and remind me...*

4. How should we respond to the fact that Jesus knows what's going on in our souls? What have we learned about Jesus thus far to make us think soberly about this fact? *You know my soul, Lord; help me...*

5. Jesus knew what was in every person. He knew what the Jewish leaders were thinking, and where that would take Him. He knew the shallowness of those who “believed” because they saw the signs, and that they were only looking out for themselves. And yet He went ahead with His plans and agenda, despite knowing that *many were arrayed against Him and few would stand with Him*. How should this attitude of Jesus affect the way you live in your Personal Mission Field? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed from questions 1-4.

Summary

“If they believed, why did he not entrust himself to them? Clearly the words ‘many believed in him’ are not said about a firm and true faith, such as the faith of those who, after believing once that his

words were true, considered him as a doctor of truth, without doubting the things said by him. That kind of faith is typical of the true believers. But here, John refers to people who were astonished by the events that happened and praised him as a great and admirable man. In fact, not all of them approved his words by showing their respect for him to others. Such respect, too, is typical of true believers. So, he added, 'But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them.' In these words there is a particular doctrine of the true faith. Indeed, the virtue of the knowledge of Christ is revealed through which he was not cheated by the outward appearance of those coming to him. Rather by recognizing precisely each of them for who they were, he knew already who were the true disciples and who were in doubt and coming to him under false pretenses." *Theodore of Mopsuestia (35-428 AD)*

Jesus knows us. He knows the depth and trueness of our faith. He will entrust Himself and His Kingdom only to those whose faith is more than a self-interested commitment. What is Jesus looking for from us in the way of true, trustworthy faith?

Closing Prayer

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;
He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;
In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he honors those who fear the LORD;
He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;
He *who* does not put out his money at usury,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these *things* shall never be moved.

Psalm 15

Psalm 15.1-3 (*Arlington: This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*)

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
Forever in God's house will be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Let truth from every heart proceed, and slander disappear:
Thus shall we know God's grace indeed, and feel His presence near.

7 Jesus to Love and Fear

Read and meditate on John 2.23-25.

Jesus' first forays into the public square show the broad scope of His grace and power. He is the gentle Savior, Who condescends to meet even our most mundane needs – as for wine at a wedding. And He is the righteous and fearsome Son of God, Who will not stand by while His Father's house or Name are dishonored. He is Jesus to be loved, and Jesus to be feared. Both at the same time.

¹³Now when the Passover of the Jews was near, then Jesus went to Jerusalem, ¹⁴and there He found within the temple many who were selling oxen, sheep, and doves unto the pilgrims who had come to worship – and the money-changers, working at their stand.

¹⁵He made a whip of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, tearing down each stall and pouring out the money that He found, and turning all their tables upside-down.

¹⁶He said to those who sold the doves, "Now take these things away from here! And do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

¹⁷(His followers would remember with surprise that it was written: "Zeal consumes Me for My Father's house.")

¹⁸And then the Jews stood forth and answered saying, "What sign do You show us, since You do these things, that we might know Your right to do so?" ¹⁹Jesus then replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews said, "It has been now nearly fifty years since men began to build this temple, and You will in three days raise it up?" ²¹They did not know that He was speaking to them of His body. ²²His disciples would recall that He said this, when, later, He had risen from the dead. Then they believed the word which Jesus said, and all the Scriptures.

²³Now when He was in Jerusalem for Passover, and when the people saw the signs which He had done, then many in His Name believed. ²⁴To none of them did Jesus trust Himself, for He knew every man, ²⁵and Jesus had no need for anyone to tell Him what was in the heart of man, for He knew every man.

- John 2.13-25

Reflect

1. John is giving us some lessons on discipleship in this story. We begin to understand who is and who isn't a true disciple, and how disciples think about Jesus and what it means to follow Him. Explain. Complete this prayer: Lord, I know my discipleship is constantly before You. When You look on me, Lord, and on my heart, I pray that You will see...

2. This story carries some lessons about faith and culture as well. Holy days, sacred places, commerce, tools (such as a whip) – these are all aspects of culture, and Jesus interacts with each of them. Can culture be a means of glorifying God? Explain. *Lord, I'm involved in culture all day long! So I...*
3. The Christian life involves three “looks.” The Christian is always looking back, looking ahead, and looking around. How can you see this in our passage for this week? To what do believers look back? To what do we look ahead? With what eyes do we look around? *Give me clear vision, Lord, to see my life as...*
4. Suppose you are reading the Gospel of John with an unbelieving friend, and he is alarmed by Jesus’ use of violence in this passage. How would you explain this to help your friend see Jesus properly, and not just as some self-righteous hooligan? *Give me understanding, Lord, into Your priorities and how these play out...*
5. Jesus walked into the temple. Upon surveying the situation, what did He *understand*? How did this make Him *feel*? And what priorities did this pique in His *conscience*? Meditate on the way mind, heart, and conscience interact to generate actions. How can we make sure our actions are consistent with the will of Christ? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“Christ does not yet commit himself to such novices, showing that affinity with God is a great thing and most worthy of love. It does not just lie there before those who want to have it but is achieved by an intense desire for good, along with diligence and time. Let the stewards of the mysteries of the Savior learn then not to suddenly admit just anyone within the sacred veils or to permit them to approach the divine tables who are neophytes who might be untimely baptized and importunately believing on Christ the Lord of all. As an example to us in this also in teaching us whom rightly to initiate, he indeed receives the believers but is seen not yet to have confidence in them in that he does not commit himself to them, making clear that it is only right that novices spend no small time under instruction, for rarely even then will they become faithful.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

Imagine how shocked Jesus’ disciples must have been at this display. They had only seen Jesus as a mysterious, quiet, behind-the-scenes, gentle Messiah. Then this. How would *you* have responded? Would your faith in Jesus have been strengthened, or would you have hesitated to continue following Him? Explain.

Closing Prayer

For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:
“This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
I will also clothe her priests with salvation,
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
There I will make the horn of David grow;
I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.
His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”

Psalm 132.13-18

Psalm 132.13-18 ([*Finlandia: Be Still My Soul*](#))

God dwells among us, and He will forever,
To meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior,

And made us His eternal resting-place.
His foes are banished from His presence ever,
But we shall reign with Him before His face.

The Gospel of John: John 2.13-25

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What's the most important part of this story of Jesus in Jerusalem for you as a disciple? Why?
2. How does John use the Old Testament in telling His story of Jesus? Do you feel confident you could tell the story of Jesus from the Old Testament? Explain.
3. The question of authority is on the table in this situation. What differences can you cite between Jesus' view of authority and that of His interlocutors?
4. What do we learn in this passage about faith, following Jesus, and being a disciple of the Lord?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 2.13-25? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.