

Church of Our Saviour  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

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The Third Sunday in Lent

March 7, 2021

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Text: John 2:13-22

Title: "Zeal, For the Father's House"

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***In the Name of (+) Jesus our Lord. Amen.***

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I love churches! And I detect you do too! There is real, true blue love for this church, the Church of Our Saviour! Some don't love churches! We have to be real! Some, want nothing to do with churches! They want them gone! And, some desecrate churches!!

I've seen the desecration! It happened one night to our church in Los Angeles! Spray-painted graffiti! Doors and

windows broken! Church records strewn about! And, human waste! Smearred and spray-painted! Made me want to cry!

(PAUSE)

Good happens in churches! Those of us who love church say that! The Baptisms! The Confirmations! The weddings! The funerals! Stories about faith! Stories about life! Some of those stories brave and daring! Some stories humble and out of view!

If the walls of this church could talk, think of the stories that would be told? Happy stories! Blessed stories! Stories of births! And confirmations! Stories of Easter and Christmas celebrations! Stories of reconciliation, where those once angry decided to end the anger and work and serve together!

There are sad church stories, too! Stories of separation and division! Where issues so divided people that some had to move on to other churches! Or, move on to no church at all!

(PAUSE)

We decided in the congregation that I served for 22 years attention should be given to some of that history! It was history in pictures buried away in file cabinets! We pulled the pictures out covering many years of the congregation's life! And our son and a friend of his, both building contractors now, and both members of St. Mark Church at the time, designed a special holder that ran down the length of a long hallway where pictures of past church events could be displayed, almost a hundred- years-worth! And, we saw people regularly looking and remembering!

(PAUSE)

We know, I would guess, baptisms and wedding ceremonies and funerals can be done in other places beside churches! It's happening now more than ever! A sign, I think, of people hurt and harmed people by church, like, no, you can't receive Holy Communion here! You are not a member! Or, the church's bad history is catching up!

I'm not saying that what we do in the name of church is better than what is done in other circumstances! No reason to brag! But I am saying, when we baptize, when we confirm, when we conduct funerals, when people are married here, the history is meaningful!

(PAUSE)

It was at the Passover, a religious festival of long standing for the Jewish people, that Jesus “went up” to Jerusalem! In the Scripture, it’s always “up” to Jerusalem! There’s reason!

And, while in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the Temple! And what he saw there, distressed him and made him so angry, he had to do something about the buying and selling particularly, cutting the poorer people off from the Temple’s worship!

With anger he made a whip out of cords and drove the merchants out! He overturned their tables and threw away their money! The Temple is a place of worship, he said! And you have made it into a store, a market, a place to sell and buy, a place to make money! And, when the Lord’s house was turned into that, Jesus exploded!

(PAUSE)

The Temple was built, like your church, this church, the church we are in this morning, to be a place of worship directed at God! Not us! Here we worship God! Not us! Here we honor God! Not us!

Here God teaches us! And we learn! Here, we are forgiven! Here, we learn what God expects from his people! Here we pray! Mostly for others! Here, in tis church, your church, we are fed and strengthened by Holy Communion! Here we are told of the hope of heaven and everlasting life! It is our ultimate hope! Here, we are made strong for facing of life! And, here we are related, disciples all, sisters and brothers in faith, making us, family!

Here we humbly learn, at least we should learn, we are not the last and final word on all things religious! Here we learn

that true religion is not about itself! Here we learn that too much of what is called religion in our time is not really religion at all! It's too much about what we like, what we don't like, what appeals to us, what does not appeal to us! It's our choices, what we like and dislike, that shapes too much of church life in our day!

Jesus felt the need to stand up that day in Jerusalem's temple! He felt the need to say, loud and with temper, what religion is not! It is not a place to buy and sell! It is not a place of profit! It is a place to see and find God!

If the church is only about economics, we lose! We lose purpose! We lose the basic reason for existence! And too often we lose love, our first and only reason for being church! The

door must always be open wide to all people! No matter if they can afford the dues, as we used to call offerings, or, can't!

(PAUSE)

In the Temple, in church, in God's house, there is no division between rich and poor! Let's go further! In the Temple, in church, in God's house, shouldn't matter if you are Democrat or Republican! In the Temple, in church, in God's house, there is neither liberal or conservative! In the Temple, in church, in God's house, there is always room for anyone of any race! White! Black! Brown! In the Temple, in the church, in God's house, it isn't just for Lutherans, or, Catholics, or, Reformed or Jewish! All are God's people! There really is no reason, no reason, in the religion of our Lord Jesus, to exclude anyone!

(PAUSE)

There was a mess in the Temple! A mess made by the people who went there to pray and sing psalms and offer sacrifices, but also to buy and sell and make big-time money! And, Jesus said, no!

It was that and other reasons, like equality and unity and love, most of all, that finally brought Jesus down and put him on a Cross! And the leaders of that day, official Jerusalem, both political and religious leaders, believed they would be better off without him and without that message!

Jesus was not neutral on that issue! He pleaded, he did not force, with the people in his day, as he pleads with us now, decide what church must be! A home for all people? Or, just for some? Do we hear him? Do we follow him?

AMEN