

Good morning St. John's and good morning Lord. Thank you for dwelling with us in our neighborhood.

How long has your temple been under construction? Some days I feel like mine is about as efficient as the renovation of the St. John's sanctuary. Often times our body which is the vessel of the Holy Spirit needs renovation. I am not talking about going to the gym in search of six pack abs or a new haircut. I am talking about an inner restoration and renovation. When our bodies get messy we might need to do some renovations or perhaps even a major overhaul. How do we accomplish this? what are the tools we need? to answer these questions lets do a little Bible study of today's Gospel.

This story is often lauded as the exposure of Jesus as angry. A testimony to his human nature. But to just say wow, Jesus got angry and then use that to justify our anger is off base.

Yes, anger is an acceptable emotion, and in our understanding of Jesus' anger is a place where some renovation might be needed, it is important to understand what he was angry about. AND the purpose of the demonstration of his anger. So get out your mental crowbar and rip out the interior places of your temple where unhealthy anger dwells. Is there some mold there? Any rot that needs to be restored? Because see anger for the sake of anger is not good décor for your temple. Anger needs to be a catalyst for change. That is what Jesus was doing. The point being made here is that the spirit of God is getting ready to move big time. Remember that for the Jews, the Temple is where the presence of God dwells. Historically the Temple/dwelling place of the essence of God has not always been a building. Throughout the Old Testament the place where or the symbol of God's essence moves with God's people. Gen 1 in beginning, in Exodus it is in the fire, in the cloud, in the

tent, and in the Ten Commandments. Jesus is saying that the temple of God is no longer about a place to come and make sacrifice. Jesus is putting everyone on notice that the temple that houses the essence of God is now Jesus. Jesus is about to make the final sacrifice and the place where the essence of God dwells is going to move from an exterior dwelling place to an indwelling into the hearts of humankind. God is moving into the neighborhood.

So, Jesus is not very happy with how things are going at the Temple. This is a place where we have to be careful to not jump to a prejudicial conclusion that all Jews were defaming the spirit of God. There continued to be faithful followers of the word and the law. After all Jesus is a Jew. The point here is not to say that Judaism as a practice of worship is wrong. Spiritual relationship with God is a central theme of the Rabbinic tradition. This is how John tells us that Jesus is the Messiah and

it is in him that God dwells. So get out your rollers and paintbrushes and paint over the misunderstanding that John was against all things Jewish and repaint with a bright yellow that proclaims the light of God, the essence of God in our midst.

Now we need to get out our level. We need to check the accuracy of the of the framing of what John is telling us about tearing down the temple. That image refers to Jesus prophecy of his death and resurrection. It is not to say that it is not necessary to come to a holy place to worship. Of course we can be in the presence of God any and everywhere but we cannot worship alone. If we refer to the story of the Samaritan woman at the well; she asks Jesus where to worship God. his response is that worship happens 'neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem.' What he is telling her is that it is not about the place that you worship but that you worship in relationship. In relationship with others in the presence of Jesus. So the level

that we brought keeps us balanced with our community. When Jesus heals the blind man he restores him to the community that rejected him. the blind man's response is that he believes AND worships Jesus. John 9:38

So how is our renovation going? Literally our church is being made new for us to proclaim that we believe that Jesus is the messiah and to worship and glorify God. It is our vocation as the church to proclaim this to the world. So now we need to get out our saw and create a door. A screwdriver to mount some hinges. The door allows people to enter and provides us a way to go out into the world. We keep Sabbath as a visible sign that we are people in covenant with God. We keep Sabbath as a sign to others that we are people of the cross. We keep Sabbath to invite others in to fall in love with Jesus.

But how is your renovation coming? So Lent is a time for us to do an inventory of our body as the dwelling place of the

Holy Spirit. It is time to check in on our relationship with God and with one another. We might need What is purpose of Lent? It is about remembering God's works on our behalf. Lent marks our identity. It is time to reestablish our relationship with who we are in that relationship. Use discernment as a crowbar to tear out the things in our lives that are crusty or unsightly. We need read some inspirational devotions as rollers and paint brushes in order to repaint how we see and love one another. Greet one another with love and joy. We need to get out our spiritual level, the Bible to make sure we are in balance. We need to get out a saw and open our hearts to desire to come to worship. In relationship, in community our hearts are open to one another and to God. We are open to giving and receiving. Hinges allow us to come in and go out. We will have the desire to open our calendars to say yes to giving time, our checkbooks to saying yes to giving treasure, and we will throw open our

temple doors to offer our talent. All back to God from whom all good things come. God is counting on us.

For Jesus the Lenten time is marked by anointing, followed by beating, crucifixion, and death. He did that for us. We can't fully appreciate this by thinking or by logic. To appreciate what Jesus did for us we need to engage in personal reflection in faith and in the Word. The Word made flesh that moved into our neighborhood.