

Today's scripture goes straight to the ways in which it is different than the other three (Synoptic) gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). In the latter, Jesus goes to Jerusalem once, it serves as the climactic focus and end of the story of Jesus. Here in John, Jesus goes back and forth to Jerusalem several times. The Temple was in Jerusalem: the spiritual, political and economic capital of Israel, or Palestine (as the Romans called it). The Temple was the "eternal dwelling place for the Name of the Lord God" (Deut 14:23). In John's gospel, the Temple isn't just a place or setting, it is presented as a character in the life of Jesus.

The Passover: the primary holiday of Judaism, the remembrance of God delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, moving them towards the promised land of freedom. John mentions the Passover three times: here, and in Chapter 6:4 at the beginning of the story of the feeding of the 5,000; and also finally in John 11:55 just after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and the reason for which he goes to Jerusalem – to celebrate the festival with his disciples.

In the temple he found people selling: This was a normal aspect of the Temple establishment. Deuteronomy 14:22-29 explains tithes as the taking of what has been saved from the produce of the year, (the tithe) and using it for a party celebration of God's goodness. This was to happen at the Temple. If one lived far from Jerusalem, transporting all of that to the Temple would be tough. So one was permitted to sell one's tithe (whether animals or grain) near home and then buy others at the Temple site.

money changers: Roman coins (the money of the time) contained imperial and/or pagan portraits. As such they broke the commandment of no graven images. Consequently they couldn't be used or brought in to the Temple. A system was developed in which these coins were exchanged for legal Tyrian coinage (which contained no images). Money changers make a profit off the exchange as their salary. Why did this bother Jesus? It could be that they profited to an excess from this necessary financial transaction, thus profaning the name of God for their own economic gain.

MARKETPLACE : In Greek the words used are literally "a house of market" – an obvious word play on the Jesus calling the Temple his "Father's house" in the same verse. Throughout the 1st Testament the Temple is called the "house of God". This also is common in the NT, see Mark 2:26; Luke 2:49.

it was written: this is a direct citation of Psalm 69:9.

the scripture: it's not clear if this refers to the whole 1st Testament or to a specific scripture.

body : This phrase recalls the opening of John's Gospel in chapter 1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. It also calls to mind the first confession of Jesus by John the Baptizer in John 1:36 "as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" – the lamb as either brought or bought for sacrifice at the Temple in the act of worshipping God.

SCRIPTURES FOR

SUNDAY 1.21.2018

John 2:13-25

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹³ *The Passover* of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ **In the temple he found people selling** cattle, sheep, and doves, and the **money changers** seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a **MARKETPLACE!**" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that *it was written*, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, "What **sign** can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his **body**. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed *the scripture* and the word that Jesus had spoken.

THE CLEARING OF THE TEMPLE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The other three gospels all include this story of Jesus at the Temple at the end of their gospel version, in the last week of the life of Jesus. They, as opposed to John, point towards this as one of the events related to the institutional desire to kill Jesus, and all three quote Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 (listed below to the right). These tellings of the story seem to insist upon treachery, cheating or the desecration of the Temple. In John's telling these direct implications are absent. So what is John's point?

Matthew 21:13-14

¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹ The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

¹² Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written,

*'My house shall be called a house of prayer';
but you are making it a den of robbers.'*

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them.

Mark 11:15-17

¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶ and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

*'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?
But you have made it a den of robbers.'*

¹⁸ And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. ¹⁹ And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Luke 19:45-46

⁴⁵ Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; ⁴⁶ and he said, "It is written,

*'My house shall be a house of prayer';
but you have made it a den of robbers.'*

⁴⁷ Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; ⁴⁸ but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

²³ When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the **signs** that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- **What shimmers for you in this story of the Wedding at Cana?**
- **What word, phrase or image touches your life today?**
- **Of what is this story a sign?**
- **The Temple was the place of worship of God, where one offered a sacrifice as a sign of one's devotion, petition or faith. Jesus says that his body will replace the temple. What does that mean?**
- **How, where and when do you encounter, or experience, the presence of God in the world? When, how and where do you worship God?**

OTHER RELATED SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 56:7

⁶And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; *for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*

Jeremiah 7:11

⁸ Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. ⁹ Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"—only to go on doing all these abominations? ¹¹ *Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight?* You know, I too am watching, says the Lord.