

Pompous blustering, high sounding talk with little meaning, we see over and over again from radio hosts, media personalities, sports announcers, even politicians engage in bombastic behavior, but rarely do we see it in scripture. That's why Jesus behavior, toppling tables and yelling in the temple, caught my attention. At first I wanted to shy away from Jesus behavior **because it seems ever present in our culture** but I've come to appreciate it. So often Jesus is depicted as mild mannered and meek, don't get me wrong there is that in Jesus, but today we see something else—passion. This is fascinating, this is very valuable, we get a glimpse into what Jesus is passionate about... worship. Let me explain.

At the end of Deuteronomy 14 God gives direction for worship, “set apart a tenth of your grain, wine, oil and the first born of your herds and flocks take them to the place God chooses as a dwelling place for God's name and throw a party making sure to invite the widow, orphans and foreigners in your town. If the distance is too great that you are unable to transport it, then turn it into money. With money in hand go to the place God will choose and buy whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire and eat it there in the presence of the Lord rejoicing together.”

This is worship. The temple was the place God's name dwelt, the place to offer sacrifice. The scene that Jesus disrupts is worship, but not just any worship it is Passover worship, when lambs were killed to commemorate how God delivered Israel from death and slavery in Egypt. Pause, let's jump back to last week.

Today's reading is paired with last week's story where Jesus takes water, that used for spiritual cleansing, and turns it into

wine. With Jesus you don't need *water* for spiritual cleansing you have in *Jesus'* new wine (point to communion) given for all for the forgiveness of sin. The story of the wedding at Cana is foreshadowing, it is a sign pointing to whom Jesus is and what Jesus does. Jesus is the gift. Jesus makes us all worthy of love and connection.

Okay, back to this week. It is Passover and Jesus is disrupting the worship—the sacrifice of lambs. Wait... what did John the Baptist say in chapter one? “Jesus is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” “The heart of worship isn't these lambs,” Jesus is saying, “but the Lamb!” The temple is seen as the place where God dwells, Jesus is the place where God dwells. Jesus says, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” Where does the presence of God live? It isn't in a building, it is in Jesus. What is the heart of worship that evokes Jesus passion? The gift being given in worship is God, God's giving Jesus. Jesus is the heart of worship.

Just like at the temple in Jesus' day, we are also preoccupied with making the transactions we believe necessary for worship: who's singing, reading, making coffee, getting here on time. Jesus continues to say to us, with just as much passion, “Do you see the gift? In me there is abundant life for all the world.” The heart of worship is God's action. God loving. God giving. God working amongst us and through us. The heart of worship is Jesus active in our worship, active in our lives, active in our world. Jesus is so passionate about God being at the center of worship, because worship is not about *our* getting it right. Martin Luther puts it this way,

“This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness; not health, but hearing; not being, but becoming; not rest but exercise. We are not yet what

we shall be, but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.”

Worship, really all of the Christian life, isn't about us getting it right. It is that God is not done with us. God keeps showing up and never gives up. With grace inviting us to become more even as God loves us just as we are.

Jesus is free gift with no strings attached. There are no conditions put on God's love. No matter where you are, what you've done or not done; God's love is there. God is passionate about you. God loves you, cares for you and will never leave you. Amen.