

Our Temple Life

1 Samuel 3:1-20 with John 2:13-22 and 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Sunday, January 22, 2012--Orion

Old Testament Lesson, 1 Samuel 3:1-11

¹ The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

⁶ Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.

Brown Bag Story

Reflection

One of the lessons we learn from this little story of Samuel is that God can and does call us to minister on his behalf, even at an early age.

I don't remember how old I was when I was first called into the ministry, but I've been told that when I was just five years old, I talked about one day becoming a missionary. I may have been as young—or younger—than Samuel when God called me for this work.

Likewise, God may be calling some of you into full-time ministry—even at an early age. It's up to you to say, "Here I am, Lord. I'm your servant. I'm ready to respond."

For others of you, you don't have to be called to full-time ministry in order to be called of God. There are lots of ministries in the church that you can fulfill as a layperson. However, as a layperson you may still make the same mistake that Samuel made: Samuel assumed the call was from someone other than God; he assumed Eli was calling him.

We may likewise hear God's call on our lives but assume it's something else. I invite you to listen for the voice of God as we sing.

Hymn No. 593, Here I Am, Lord

Gospel Lesson, John 2:13-22

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their

tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

²⁰ They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection

Passover was the greatest of all Jewish festivals. Jews from all over the world would make their pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem and offer their sacrifice in order to atone for their sins.

An important part of their pilgrimage was paying the annual temple tax of a half-shekel, roughly the equivalent of two days’ wages.

Once the Jews arrived in Jerusalem, they had to purchase a cow or a sheep or a dove—each without spot—in order to offer their sacrifice. However, the Jews emphasized purity in all aspects of their worship and that meant that Greek or Roman or Egyptian coins were too unclean to purchase an animal for a proper Jewish offering. This opened up a whole industry of money-changing with vendors charging as much as another day’s wages in order to make the exchange. Then there was the additional cost of purchasing an animal and, as you can imagine, they were outrageously priced.

The result was loud, raucous and competitive marketing in the courts of the temple—courts which were intended for worship. But how could anyone worship in such a carnival-like atmosphere?

Jesus was not surprised when he entered the temple courts; but he was disturbed. He cleared the chaotic commerce from the temple and cried out, “Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!”



Candice and I lived in the Dallas area for five years. If the United States has a Bible belt, then Dallas is the buckle of the belt.

Singing groups loved ministering in the churches of Dallas for that very reason. But one of the things they always had to take into consideration was the manner in which they could sell their records and cassettes. (Yes, I said “records and cassettes;” it’s been a long time since we lived in Dallas!) One of the debates in Bible belt churches was whether or not one could have that form of commerce on church property; and if so, where? Churches did not want to bring Jesus’ indictment of John 2:16 upon themselves.

But that’s not really what Jesus was challenging in this passage; rather, Jesus was critical of the fact that such worldly practices had entered into such a sacred space. The story of his cleansing the temple invites us to ask ourselves: have I allowed the worldly influences to invade the sacred spaces of my life?”

This was not the only time Jesus cleared the temple; he did so again near the end of his ministry. In Mark 11:17, Jesus cleansed the temple, crying out, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all people!”

All these worldly practices were taking place in what should have been the court of the Gentiles—the place where outsiders could find God. But how could they find God in such a worldly, chaotic place?

Jesus knew that we need spaces in our lives that are set apart for God; places where we can go and find that peace which surpasses all understanding that it is able to keep our hearts and our minds in Jesus Christ. But if our lives are so cluttered with worldly things, how can that peace ever be found?

Let me ask you: are there places in your life which are set apart for God? Or is your life—your house or even your daily calendar, so cluttered with worldly stuff that there's no place left for prayer and peace with God?



We have an old, beat up chair in our basement. It sits in a room without a television. There would be no reason for me to sit in it except that's where I read my Bible. That is the space in our home that is set apart for my time with God.



There's something else for us in these verses: after Jesus scatters the moneychangers, chasing them from the temple, the Jews ask him for a sign to prove that he has the authority to do what he just did.

Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days."

The Jews assumed he was referring to the temple of brick and mortar but we know of course know he was referring to his crucifixion and resurrection. But what's significant about that in terms of today's study is that Jesus is telling us that a temple is more than a building; a temple is a body.

Response No. 2164, Sanctuary

New Testament Lesson, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹² "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins people commit are outside their bodies, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Reflection

Paul picks up the theme introduced to us by Jesus in John chapter 2. In that gospel, Jesus spoke of his body as a temple. Paul expands on that thought: not only is the body of Jesus a temple, but when Christ comes to live within us, then our body likewise is transformed into a temple.

That is really quite profound because it tells us how closely God is willing to be identified with us.

Have you ever been asked for a reference? I have. Several years ago I had someone ask me for a reference and quite frankly I didn't want to be identified with that person in any way, shape or form. It's because I knew a thing or two about that person's behavior and I didn't want him to take that job only to resume that bad behavior and then have the employer assume that either I condoned such behavior or that I behaved that way myself.

But that's what God does for us. God is willing to be fully identified with us even though God fully knows what kind of bad behavior we're not only capable of, but will inevitably do. And yet, God is willing to risk his own reputation by transforming our sinful body into temple in which he then takes up residence.

Fully aware of the profundity of that transaction, Paul reminds us that once we give ourselves to Christ, that our bodies—not just our spirits—become his temple. And that ought to have a dramatic affect on our behavior. It means that we will refrain from practices which jeopardize our health such as using tobacco, abusing alcohol, eating indiscriminately or neglecting exercise.

But there's more: in the immediate context, Paul warns the Corinthians about sexual immorality. He begins by writing, "All things are lawful for me." Modern translations put that statement in quotation marks and rightly so because it was a popular saying of that day.

Paul counters that statement by saying that just because something is legal it doesn't mean that it's either helpful or right.

The Corinthians thought they could engage in any sort of sexual behavior as long as it didn't hurt anyone else.

Sound familiar?

Paul's response was that sexual immorality harms your relationship with Christ. That's because:

- Salvation brings us into an intimate relationship with God.
- Sex is a gift from God.
- Sex is also an act of intense intimacy.
- Therefore, to engage in such an intimate act as sex in an immoral fashion—whether casually or with a prostitute—is to engage in an act that stands in contradiction with the intimacy of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's why Paul tells us to "flee sexual immorality." Those who commit sexual sin are committing sin against their own bodies, which is to say, they are committing sin against their own temple where God dwells. And "you are not your own; you were bought with a price"—the precious blood of Jesus—"Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Response No. 2164, Sanctuary

Worship through Consecration

Psalm of Confession No. 854, Psalm 139 with response

*Hymn No. 2051, I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry

*Benediction

*Postlude