

Jesu Juva

“Tremendously Comforting”

Text: John 2:13-22; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Exodus 20:1-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

What a *tremendously comforting* account is told us in the Holy Gospel today. If you didn't hear it that way, that's okay. I'll explain. Because I don't think most hear it that way. Many people are puzzled by this side of Jesus we hear about today, so used to the kind, compassionate, tender, healing Jesus are we. But by clearing out the Temple of those selling animals and exchanging money, Jesus is showing the same zeal for us and for our salvation as always. For He drives out demons, He drives out sicknesses and diseases, and He drives out those who *make* [His] *Father's house a house of trade*.

And there's this too: Jesus knew these actions were going to get Him killed. *Zeal for your house will consume me*, the psalmist wrote of Jesus so many years before. Meaning not so much that this zeal was going to well up in Him and take control of Him and make Him fly into a rage, but that this zeal was going to have Him consumed; it was going to have Him hunted down and destroyed. That is what we're moving toward again this season of Lent - to the cross of Jesus. But He didn't care. He didn't care that this was going to have Him hunted down and killed because He cares about you so much. So He wouldn't stop . . . and that's *tremendously comforting*.

Tremendously comforting for people like you and me who don't care so much. No, I take that back - we do care . . . just mostly about ourselves. For we heard the verses containing the Commandments from Exodus and doing those things *won't* get us killed, they are just maybe an inconvenience at best - yet how ya' doing with those?

Not hurt or harm our neighbor and to help him in his need;
not speak poorly of him but to speak well of him and encourage him;
not take what is his and help him to improve what he has;
honor marriage and sexual purity and not tempt those around us;
not lie or gossip or hurt anyone's reputation;
honor, respect, and obey our parents and other authorities;
not allow the sinful urges and impulses of our hearts to dictate our actions;
honor God above all else, to hear His Word regularly and often,
and regard His Name as sacred and use it in prayer.

How ya' doing with all that? Maybe sometimes we do some of that . . . but not enough. Truth is, our zeal for others and for God often runs cold or dries up altogether in the face of opposition, fear, or just plain laziness and selfishness.

That's why Lent is a good time to examine ourselves and take a good, hard look not only at our actions, but at our priorities, at our loves, at our desires, and all that is twisted and out of whack in us, and repent. To turn us away from ourselves again and to God in faith and to our neighbor in love.

But even more that we sinners hear the *tremendously comforting* word of Jesus again. The word of all that He has done for us. Which is why St. Paul said ***we preach Christ crucified***. And why He insisted on it. This is the word we need. This is the word we cannot do without. We preach Christ crucified, we means we don't preach ourselves, we don't preach what we can do, we don't preach about how to have a better life, we don't preach a message of self-help or feel-good theology, *because all of that really doesn't matter*. What matters is this man, this God-man, who cared about us so much that He laid down His life to the most horrible death then invented by man - and maybe ever invented by man - **for you**. That it *wouldn't* happen to you. That though you die, yet you will live because of Him. And nothing was going to stop Him.

So when Jesus finds out that the Temple has been turned into something it was never meant to be, He acts. And when challenged does not back down but doubles down: Not only will He clear out those selling animals and exchanging money, but ***Jesus answered them, "Destroy this [whole] temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"*** Impossible, you mad man!

Now, for comparison, imagine if Jesus went to the National Cathedral just over the river there in DC and started throwing down and throwing out everything that doesn't belong in a Church - like the gargoyle of Darth Vader, or the statue of Eleanor Roosevelt, or the stained glass window dedicated to man's space exploration instead of the Creator of space, and everything else there that honors man and not God. How upset would people be? And then imagine that when challenged, He says: *Destroy this whole building and in three days I will raise it up*. This building that took 83 years to construct, is 30 stories tall, weighs 150,000 tons, and then even almost four years after an earthquake did some damage to the building and it *still* hasn't been fixed - and you're going to rebuild the whole thing in three days? Right. Mad man!

So, to those in the Temple that day - the Jerusalem Temple that compared to the National Cathedral was a bit smaller in size, equal in grandeur, but of greater importance to the nation - Jesus, you're worse than mad, you're stupid and dangerous. You have to be dealt with. You have to be silenced. You have to be killed.

And thus they fulfilled Jesus' words. Not only that zeal for His Father's house would be the cause of His being hunted down and destroyed, but that they did destroy the Temple of God. Because, John tells us, He wasn't really talking about the building, but about His Body. He was the new Temple of God. He was the new dwelling place of God with man.

And so really, those who valued and revered the Temple so highly were the very ones who would bring about its end.

And then Jesus would fulfill His words. He would *raise it up in three days*. Which was no less a miracle than if He had rebuilt the Temple that took them 46 years to build in three days. It was actually even greater. That one who was slaughtered and butchered and killed and thrown into a hole in a rock, would rise back to life in three days. And He wouldn't come out of that tomb the same battered and abused person that went in, but completely whole and healed and perfect again. All sin, all death, all evil completely gone, and a new life begun.

For you. You see, Jesus didn't rise for Himself because He didn't die for Himself. He did it all for you, that you too rise to a new life. And not just on the Last Day, but even now. And that's what your Baptism does. You who are born dead in your trespasses and sins are raised with Jesus to a new life. You who are battered and abused by sin and evil - coming both from yourself and from others - are healed and raised in the forgiveness of Jesus. In Baptism, you are whole and healed and perfected in Jesus. And the same is true when your baptismal promises are reapplied to you in the Absolution and you are washed and cleansed and raised again. Your sin and evil and death sentence gone, and a new life begun.

Tremendously comforting words indeed.

And so again, as St. Paul said, *we preach Christ crucified*. A stumbling block to some and folly to others . . . but Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. This is how God shows His power, in weakness. This is how God shows His wisdom, in what men consider foolishness. Then and still today. In Jesus and now in His Word and Sacraments. They don't look like much. It's easy to doubt and disbelieve. It's easy to ignore the Word and not live as we ought because it's not getting us anywhere; there's nothing in it for me. Those who are evil seem to prosper, while the faithful struggle, endure persecution, and are now days even being beheaded.

But this is exactly why a dying and rising Saviour is then exactly what we need. A Saviour not just to save us from the things of this world and life, *but more* - to save us from death and for a life that is eternal. To give Himself for us on the cross, to give Himself to us now in preaching and in the Supper, and to give Himself to us forever. And so a Saviour that is still zealous and still not stopping - still working for you and for all people, for salvation, for life, and for a good and a future that has no end.

So don't be fooled. Let the Word of God overturn the tables of your hearts and drive out all that does not belong - all the sin and evil and unbelief - that it be His Temple, His dwelling. That we now, like the disciples, *believe not* the opinions and truth of the world,

but *the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken*. His Word to you of forgiveness and life.

Tremendously comforting words indeed.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.