

“The Passover Lamb”

March 4, 2018

Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann

The message today is divided into three parts: Part 1—I will be a worshiper at the Jerusalem Temple on the day Jesus drove out the moneychangers. Part 2—will be a video presentation of the Temple Mount today. Part 3—what this Word from God means for us.

Part 1--I was there the day that Jesus walked into the Temple. He just stood there at first, and then I saw it—I saw the fire growing in his eyes. I’d come from Galilee to the place where God said that he would meet us. And did it feel like a scam?—yeah! I came with my money in my pocket, of course. Money to buy money. You had to buy the silver coins to pay the Temple tax and the moneychangers charge a flat 8%. One silver coin for every Jewish man. The tax was due at Passover. And since it was Passover family was also expected to buy a lamb for the sacrifice. Except for me—I wouldn’t be buying a lamb. I wasn’t in the mood for the Passover celebration. My son died this year. The crops failed. There was no money. I would have to settle for one of those overpriced pigeons instead of a lamb. So, I got in line to wait for my turn at the tables—the tables of the moneychangers and merchants who were selling animals for the sacrifice.

That’s when I saw Jesus, across on the other side of the plaza. I watched as he approached the tables. He grabbed a whip from one of the guards and drove those businessmen out of the Temple and

overturned their tables and poured their money out onto the pavement. But more than that, there was something about the expression on his face. He swung that whip like it was a living thing. He acted like the moneychangers were vipers attacking his children. When they tried to stop him, he said, “Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up.” It took me three years to figure out what he meant. (Slow learner me.) He wasn’t talking about the building. That was the place where dishonest and greedy men put their grimy fingerprints all over God’s glory. They defiled the intimate process of worshiping him! That day wasn’t about destruction. It was about hope! Because now, knowing God is all about knowing Jesus.

As I think about that day back at the Temple and as I remember what Jesus did and how he did it, it feels like being rescued. Life can still be brutal. This year I’ll plant my fields again. And I’m older and I don’t have my son to help me. But here in this Temple he made a place for me to be still—where rest and trust meet right here at the God’s feet. Where I can rest in the beauty of his presence. And the price of that access—it’s Jesus. He conquered death and that’s how I make it through life.

Part 2--Come with me, now, to the Temple Mount ...

VIDEO

Part 3—It’s been seven days now—seven days since our home has been skunk free! I’ve shared with some of you my problem. For the past month or more we have had a family of skunks living under the front porch. We’ve tried everything to get rid of them—bright lights, loud music, orange peels, ammonia (skunks, I am told have very sensitive noses). But nothing worked. Here’s the problem--skunks mark their territory. Your house begin to smell like skunk and then you begin to smell a little bit like skunk and finally you get used to the skunk smell and it doesn’t bother you

anymore. So, first off, I want to apologize. Don't feel bad if you've said to yourself, "Pastor Mann smells a little off today!" There is a reason for that. Second, I want to say that having a skunk under your porch is a little like having sin in your life. Here's the analogy—it's hard to get rid of the smell of skunk and it's hard to get rid of the stink of sin.

This is where we come back to the Temple. The whole reason for the Temple in Jerusalem was to deal with the problem of sin. How did you deal with the problem of sin in the Old Testament?—through sacrifice. Sacrifice was what the Jerusalem Temple was all about. Now remember, this is Passover. Ordinarily the population of Jerusalem is about 100,000 people. But at Passover, multiply that by four—400,000. Each family brings a lamb. Let's say 10 people in a family—400,000 divided by 10 = 40,000 animals sacrificed at the Temple on just this one day! As a kid I remember driving through town and riding with my family past the stockyards. It always stunk! Chicago is called the "Windy City" but when the wind was from the south that was bad news. The Jerusalem Temple, with its daily schedule of sacrifices, was no different. Sacrifice was what the Law of Moses required. Hebrews 9:22 says—"The Law requires that almost everything be purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin."

When Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John, John looks at Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." These words occur in the gospel of John 1:29. Today we're reading from chapter 2. Jesus Cleansing the Temple on Passover. Do you think, perhaps maybe, that John, the gospel-writer, wants us to make a connection? And then, later, when John writes that Jesus is crucified on Good Friday, and it just so happens to be another Passover three years later, and Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell us that Jesus breathed his last and died on

the cross at the ninth hour (which is 3:00 pm on the day of Passover)--exactly the time when the priests at the Temple begin to slaughter the Passover lambs—don't you think there's something we're supposed to understand?--that Jesus, the Son of God—is the ultimate Passover Lamb—our once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin.

And so, here is what I want you to remember from today—There are times when we can feel far away from God, because of our sin or because of the effects of sin on our lives. But Jesus died for you. He is your Passover Lamb—your sacrifice for sin. The stink of sin is gone. No other sacrifice is required. Second, Jesus invites you to come near to God. “It is written,” Jesus says, “My Father’s house shall be a house of prayer for all people.” This is your place of prayer where you can meet with God. And you have every right to be here because this is your Father’s house. You belong here because Jesus shed his blood for you.