

10/24/10

Series Title: “*John’s Gospel of Jesus: God in Flesh*”

Today’s Title:

“*Passion for the House of God*”

Scripture Reading: John 2:13-22

Text: John 2:13-22

Introduction: (Illustration from Nelson, pp.814-815)

Karen Burton Mains wrote these well-phrased admonitions about worship in the preface of the hymnbook, *Sing Joyfully*:

“Worship has been defined as *being preoccupied with God*. How do we learn to become preoccupied with God? By cultivating *intentionality*. By deliberately turning our minds toward divine preoccupation. By developing worship habits and working on them. Intentional worship means a worshipper is not going to church expecting that worship will just happen; but intentionality means that a worshipper is going to church determined to make worship happen...

“A church bulletin aptly (said): ‘Too many Christians worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.’ We must learn to work at our worship so that preoccupation with God becomes delightfully habitual.

“The biblical ethic regards worship as work. *Av’dh* in Hebrew, *dienst* in German, *leitourgia* in Greek, *service* in English all have the double meaning of worship and work. In fact, liturgy means ‘common work.’

“We must remind ourselves, over and over, that the focus of Sunday worship must be upon the living Christ among us. In truth, if Christ were bodily present and we could see him with more than our soul’s eyes, all our worship would become intentional. If Christ stood on our platforms, we would bend our knees without asking. If He stretched His hands and we saw the wounds, our hearts would break; we would confess our sins and weep over our shortcomings. If we could hear His voice leading the hymns, we too would sing heartily; the words would take on meaning. The Bible reading would be lively;

meaning would pierce to the marrow of our souls. If Christ walked our aisles, we would hasten to make amends with that brother or sister to whom we had not spoken. We would volunteer for service, the choir loft would be crowded. If we knew Christ would attend our church Sunday after Sunday, the front pews would fill fastest, believers would arrive early, offering plates would be laden with sacrificial but gladsome gifts, prayers would concentrate our attention.

“Yet...Christ is present.”

Premise: *God is passionate about the honor of His name*

Outline:

I. The Reverence of God’s Person

II. The Redirection of Genuine Passion

III. The Residence of Gracious Presence

I. THE REVERENCE OF GOD’S PERSON

A. God is holy: He is to be feared

“...do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

Note: Solomon’s building and dedication of the temple in Jerusalem....

c/w II Chronicles 5:1-2, 13-14, 6:18-21, 7:1-3, 11-18

B. God is transcendent: He is distinct from His creation

“Take these things away....”

- Each worshipper was allowed to bring to the temple an animal of his own selection
- Political pressure discounted personal sacrifices as adequate offerings
- Dealers in cattle and sheep would be tempted to charge exorbitant prices for such animals: they would exploit the worshippers, charging \$4. for a pair of doves worth a nickel.
- The money changers gave the worshipper lawful, Jewish coin in exchange for foreign currency. However, only Jewish coins were allowed to be offered in the temple,

and every worshipper – women, slaves, and minors excepted – had to pay the annual temple tribute of half a shekel.

- The money-changers, then, would charge a certain fee for every exchange transaction.

- Sparky Grace's manuscript on the idolatry of materialism

Sound the alarm; a wolf has entered the sheep pen. Never mind, this wolf is no foe. After all he has brought some really great stuff that we need. He isn't like all the other wolves. Look how the sun reflects off his manicured claws. His coat is perfectly groomed and quaffed. That smell, I can't place it, it reminds me of Polo but less 80's. Surely, this is the best smelling wolf to enter the pen. (He even smells better than the shepherd.) All wolves can't be bad, right? After all, we can see our wools' reflection in the mirror like lenses of the wolf's Versace sunglasses. Uh oh, my fluffy, wool coat doesn't look like some of the other sheep. Nice! The wolf has some almond oil to pre treat my wool before shearing. No way, tea tree styling wool-paste, now my wool is no longer old-school. Thank you, mister wolf for all of these things to make me better than the other sheep. The wolf doesn't leap back over the fence. He swaggers on out of the pen using the same gate the shepherd uses. While the sheep make a horseshoe formation the shepherd gets bumped out of the way. The view through the gate is too tight for all the sheep to watch the wolf leave. The remaining sheep rush the fence line like the opening of a rock concert. Starting the engine of his Italian sports car the wolf startles the shepherd's donkey that is tied to a post. The shepherd whistles for attention and to start the process of afternoon feeding. The sheep are now defocused. Some sheep aren't even hungry. "Come along now, you need to graze and drink fresh water from the stream," the shepherd humbly says. Some sheep still stay behind, they don't need to eat. They can't fit into some of the things that the wolf brought. Even though they enjoy grazing with the other sheep they feel like less of a sheep. Lonely and depressed the remaining flock gathers by the fence where the stylish wolf entered. Looking at each other they mentally notice all of the things that some sheep have compared to themselves. Longing for the wolf's return they think; what does the shepherd know anyway? "A donkey, really, nobody rides a donkey anymore," one sheep boldly announces.

“Who wants to follow some donkey rider anyway?” “Freakin donkey

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rider, I wish he would just die or leave us alone, what has this shepherd ever done for us>” another sheep questions. The next sheep launches into a verbal tirade. “Homely looking bum that’s what he is, always ordering us around, telling us to follow him. Hey, the wolf didn’t ask us to follow him. I hate this miserable field. Same grass, same dumb stream, let’s get out of here. We can follow the wolf’s tire tracks and make our own name for ourselves!”

C. God is eternal: He is relational

“...my Father....” -

- Hymn by Steele, #177

*My God, my Father – blissful name, -
O, may I call thee mine?
May I with sweet assurance claim
A portion so divine?*

*This only can my fears control,
And bid my sorrows fly;
What harm can ever reach my soul
Beneath my Father’s eye?*

*Whate’er thy holy will denies,
I calmly would resign;
For thou art good, and just, and wise:
O, bend my will to thine.*

*Whate’er thy sacred will ordains,
O, give me strength to bear;
And let me know my Father reigns,
And trust his tender care.*

II. THE REDIRECTION OF GENUINE PASSION

A. Before Christ we were zealous for fleshly appetites

v.14 *“In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.”*

c/w Ephesians 4:17-19

c/w Ephesians 2:1-3

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(Illustration from Nelson, pp.21-22)

In *The Wounded Heart*, Henri Nouwen retells a tale from ancient India: Four royal brothers decided each to master a special ability. Time went by, and the brothers met to reveal what they had learned.

“I have mastered a science,” said the first, “by which I can take but a bone of some creature and created the flesh that goes with it.”

“I,” said the second, “know how to grow that creature’s skin and hair if there is flesh on the bones.”

The third said, “I am able to create its limbs if I have the flesh, the skin, and the hair.”

“And I,” concluded the fourth, “know how to give life to that creature if its form is complete.”

Thereupon the brothers went into the jungle to find a bone so they could demonstrate their specialties. As it turned out, the bone they found was a lion’s. One added flesh to the bone, the second grew hide and hair, the third completed it with matching limbs, and the fourth gave the lion life.

Shaking its mane, the ferocious beast arose and jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle.

We too have the capacity to create what can devour us. Goals and dreams can consume us. Possessions and property can turn and destroy us – unless we first seek God’s kingdom and righteousness.

B. After Christ we are zealous for God’s salvation

1. v.15 “*And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen.*”
2. vv.18-22 “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up....But he was speaking of the temple of his body. When therefore 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.”

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c/w Mark 14:55-58

- Albert Barnes

Thus early did he foretell his death and resurrection, for at the beginning of his work he had a clear foresight of all that was to take place. This knowledge shows clearly that he came from heaven, and it evinces, also, the extent of his love – that he was willing to come to save us, knowing clearly what it would cost him. Had he come without such an expectation of suffering, his love might have been far less; but when he fully knew all that was before him, when he saw that it would involve him in contempt and death, it shows compassion “worthy of a God” that he was willing to endure the load of all our sorrows, and die to save us from death everlasting. When Jesus says, “I will raise it up,” it is proof, also, of divine power. A mere man could not say this. No deceased man can have such power over his body; and there must have been, therefore, in the person of Jesus a nature superior to human to which the term “I” could be applied, and which had power to raise the dead – that is, which was divine.

III. THE RESIDENCE OF GRACIOUS PRESENCE

A. God’s house is now among His people

c/w Revelation 1:17 – 2:1

c/w II Corinthians 6:14-18

B. God’s house is now within each believer

c/w I Corinthians 6:12-20

- Richard Baxter, *Enc. of Chr. Quotes*, p.421

Is it a small thing in your eyes to be loved by God – to be the son, the spouse, the love, the delight of the King of glory? Christian, believe this, and think about it: you will be eternally embraced in the arms of the love which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting – of the love which brought the Son of God’s love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory – that love

*which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged,
buffeted, spat upon, crucified, pierced – which*

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*fasted, prayed, taught, healed, wept, sweated, bled, died. That
love will eternally embrace you.*

C. God's house is to be honored exclusively for Him

- poem by Elizabeth Studenroth, *For the Right Reason*

Lord, let me be hated, if hated I must be,
Because the darkness looked and saw the light of You in me.
Because the fragrance of Your garments and embrace
Wafts about me with the sweet aroma of Your grace.
Because Your likeness worked in me makes Your kingship
clear,
Because I speak the loving truth they cannot want to hear,
But never never ever because in foolish pride
Was harsh or cruel and made any resentment justified,
Because I warred, despised, deceived, discouraged, or
betrayed,
And You in me were to them wronged and misdisplayed.
Not because I joined this world of selfishness and hate,
But 'cause I'm of another world they dare not contemplate –
I the servant shall not seek to not be despised
When on my precious Lord was heaped every insult devised –
I shall gladly a stranger be, by hope faith and new birth,
For You, my God, also became a stranger on this earth –
 But let me ever, purely, only, always hated be
 Because the darkness looked and say the light of You in me.

Conclusion: (Illustration from Nelson, p.813)

- from a sermon by Robert J. Morgan

The Bible says that we should magnify the Lord and rejoice in Him forever. What does that mean?

One recent evening when the moon was full I studied it from my back porch. It seemed as clear and close as the globe on the lamp post. Finding binoculars, I steadied them against the railing and magnified the moon. In other words, I focused on it, made it larger in my eyes, and studied it until I was over-

whelmed with its ivory plains and dimly outlined mountains, with its splotched craters and jagged edges.

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What happens when we magnify the Lord? Just that. We focus on Him, make Him larger in our eyes, and study Him until overwhelmed with His brightness, His love, His grace, His care, His power. And when we do that, the next verb comes into play – we rejoice in God our Savior. Magnifying Christ brings joy to our hearts, joy that levels every mountain and fills every valley. *O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name forever.*

Premise: *God is passionate about the honor of His name*