

John on Jesus - What makes Jesus angry?

Sign Title: What makes Jesus angry?

June 17, 2012

Good morning Faith family. I also want to welcome those of you connecting through the Internet. I am thankful you can join us. I want to begin with a question. What makes Jesus angry? I don't like it when people are angry. I especially don't like it when people are angry with me. The last person I want angry with me is Jesus! This morning, we will learn what makes Jesus angry. Since none of us want him angry with us, this is something all of us will be interested in.

We are studying our way through the Gospel of John. Last week, we looked at Jesus' first miracle. He turned water into wine at a wedding. John highlights only seven of Jesus' miracles in his Gospel. He calls them signs. Signs are snapshots into the character of God as seen through Jesus. Last week, we learned God has an incredible amount of grace and love for us. He cares about ordinary people who face ordinary problems. Many times, he will answer us in times of need. He cared about an unnamed young couple in a dumpy rural town that ran out of beverages at its wedding. If he cared about the man and woman enough to not let their wedding day be ruined, we can be confident he cares about us in our times of need. I found this incredibly encouraging because I am an ordinary person. I need God's grace all the time. I am sure you feel the same way.

This morning, we have a very different picture of Jesus. Jesus goes UFC fight club in the temple. Instead of softness and compassion, he redlines.

Before we look at this passage, I want to teach you something about Bible study. When it comes to Jesus' miracles, be careful about pulling them out of context. Many Bible scholars do this. They take events in Jesus' life and they don't look at the stitching that ties them to stories around them. Sometimes, if a Bible story is talked about in multiple Gospels, they blend them together like they are shuffling cards. When we do that, we are in danger of taking things out of their context. When we do that, it is easy to make the Bible story say something it was never intended to.

Let me illustrate this. What determines the meaning of a word? The sentence it is a part of. What determines the meaning of the sentence? The paragraph it is found in. What determines the meaning of a Bible story is the context that surrounds it.

It is significant that John tells us about the turning of the water to wine at the wedding of Cana then immediately follows it by telling us of Christ's cleansing of the temple. Before we look at the text, think about these stories. They are opposites. We move from a small town to the capital city. We move from ignorant country people who barely know God to highly-educated city people who are the religious elite of the day. We go from seeing the grace of Jesus when he meets the needs of a young couple to a picture of the anger of Jesus when he overturns the tables of the money changers. Both of these stories are windows into God's character as seen through Jesus. We need to take them together.

We like to reduce Jesus to one or the other. We prefer the kind portrait of him we see at the wedding of Cana but a Jesus who is angry and who removes corruption is also a good picture of him.

When we study stories in the Gospels, ask why the author put the stories together the way he did. There is meaning in their order. That is often the key to understanding these stories.

After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days. John 2:12 (ESV)

I want to look at a side note from this verse before we get into our text. How many of you heard of the perpetual virginity of Mary? The Catholics teach this. I have Catholic friends who pray to Mary and say she was always a virgin after she gave birth to Jesus. Here are a few thoughts on the perpetual virginity of Mary. First, if Mary was always a virgin, Joseph was a very unhappy man. He married a woman and then wasn't allowed to touch her. I don't know any man who is content to just sleep next to his wife. Men are interested in more than just sleep. If that was the case, it sounds like it was a curse to be the husband of Mary instead of a blessing. Second, the text says Jesus had brothers. I will let you figure out where they came from. If you have trouble with this, I recommend our local high school health class.

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. John 2:13 (ESV)

What is the Passover? The Passover is part of the Jewish calendar. It was a time when everyone who was able came to Jerusalem. In the book of Exodus, God delivered his people from bondage in Egypt. If you know the story,

God's people were facing annihilation. They were forced to work like crazy and throw their male children into the Nile River. When all your living men are being worked to death and your male babies are all thrown into the river, you are between a rock and a hard place. The only one who can come to your rescue is God. Incidentally, God didn't come to the Israelites' rescue right away. There were many years of suffering before God stepped in. Why did God wait? First, it is God's decision about when he rescues us. In the book of James we learned to consider trials as joy because God uses trials to mature us spiritually. In fact, immediate rescue from all of our trials would be the most unloving thing God could do. Immediate rescue from all trials would develop his children into spoiled brats. Second, the more hopeless the situation, the more glory goes to God in the rescue.

That is exactly what happened. God beats Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation into submission with 10 plagues. The last plague was the worst. It was the death of all the firstborns. If you are a firstborn, stand up. You are all gone. You are all dead. The only firstborns that didn't die were the firstborns of the Jews who slaughtered a lamb and put the blood on their doorposts. When the angel of death saw the lamb slaughtered in their place he passed over their home.

Passover is about celebrating and remembering God's grace toward his people in their times of need. God gave them life instead of death. God gave them freedom instead of bondage. God gave them rescue instead of annihilation. This is the celebration of Passover. As we will see, it drifted.

Why did Jesus go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover? First, since Jesus was beginning his ministry, Jerusalem at Passover is similar to Spirit Lake on July 4. Everyone is there. If you want to connect with people, you connect in Jerusalem. Second, according to Jewish tradition, if you lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem, you were obligated to be in Jerusalem for Passover. If you lived farther than 15 miles, you tried to attend anyway. Jerusalem during Passover was the one place every Jew wanted to be at least once in their life. It is similar to celebrating New Years in Times Square. It is the place everyone wants to be for the holiday. If they had television, I am sure they would carry live television footage of Passover in Jerusalem all week long.

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. John 2:14 (ESV)

Why did Jesus get angry?

As you can guess, this is not a good thing. In a moment, we will see why Jesus got angry. He got really angry. I will give you two reasons now but we will come back at the end of the message to learn a third reason for Jesus' anger.

Worship that is about convenience instead of sacrifice

When the Passover was first instituted, there were particular instructions on the animal that was to be sacrificed.

The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Exodus 12:5-6 (ESV)

The way God set it up was that the animal to be sacrificed was to be brought into the household. The kids would play with it. It was like having a new

puppy around the house. Does everybody love a puppy? Yes! It is cute. It is young. It is full of energy and life. During those two weeks, the animal would almost become a pet... then they would eat it for dinner. I know a number of you think that caused trauma to the children. Do you think it taught the kids a lesson when they were eating their pet? Do you think they understood the seriousness of sin and the harshness of death? It was an object lesson everyone remembered.

In that day, most people didn't bring a lamb they loved. They simply went to the temple to buy their lamb. It was like going to the store and buying a frozen turkey for Thanksgiving. There was no emotional connection to it. Worship didn't involve sacrifice. The death of the animal didn't touch them because it wasn't emotionally connected to them. It was convenient worship.

Folks, true worship is not about convenience, it is about sacrifice. Everything in our world is about convenience. We order by the number system at McDonald's. We shop online and have it delivered to our home. We have drive-through restaurants because it is more convenient than getting out of the car. There is nothing wrong with convenience, except when it comes to worship. Convenient worship tampers with the heart of what worship is.

But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offering that cost me nothing." 2 Samuel 24:24 (ESV)

When we give something to God that doesn't cost us our time, money or affections, there is no sacrifice about it. It is dangerous to make worship convenient. When we have worship without sacrifice, we don't have worship.

Worship that is taking advantage of people's needs

To worship at the Passover, people needed an animal to sacrifice. Commentator William Barclay points out that businessmen in the temple were taking advantage of people's needs. It is like the price of gas on the weekends. When everybody has to travel, gas station owners jack the price up at least 25 cents a gallon. You look at the price at the pump and you know they raised it because it is a holiday weekend, and because you are traveling you will be forced to pay. It is just like ordering flowers on Mother's Day. If you could buy flowers for Mother's Day a week earlier, you could do it for half the price. You can't do that, so they jack up the price and take advantage of you. This is what was happening in the temple and it made Jesus angry.

Barclay points out that during the Passover doves could sell for as much as 20 times their actual value. I know some of this is business but while they are celebrating God's undeserved grace the businessmen are ripping people off. Anybody getting angry?

In addition, the animal dealers were working under the table with the priests for a profit. In particular, Annas, the high priest, was the man lining his pockets with profits. This is how they did it. For an animal to be sacrificed, the priests had inspectors which certified the animal as clean. If you brought your own sacrifice, the inspector tried to find something wrong with it. If he could, he rejected your sacrifice. Then he offered to you pre-certified, approved and ready-to-go sacrifices that were overpriced.

The people who wanted to bring their own sacrifice were discouraged from bringing them because the animal inspectors were working with the animal sellers to increase their business. It is like a huge corrupt Enron scheme ripping off the tourists so the rich guys became richer over the holidays. Anybody getting angry? Jesus did.

We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God: for the bread set out on the table; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moon festivals and appointed feasts; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God. Nehemiah 10:32-33 (ESV)

To keep the temple operating, you were charged a tax. Aren't you thankful we don't do that in church? You come to church for free. We don't make you pay. We give freely out of a thankful heart even though ministry costs money.

The temple tax fell on every Jewish male 19 years or older. It was the responsibility of the men of God to make sure God's house had enough money to function. This way the women, children and people who are far from God had a place to worship. This way things like VBS happen. This way kids are introduced to God. That is the responsibility of the men of God.

When people poured into Jerusalem from around the world, you had a currency problem. Not everybody had the same currency so you had to exchange your money for something you could use in Jerusalem. Here is where it got bad. You were not allowed to pay your temple tax with foreign money because that money had the picture of your king on it. Everybody had to exchange their money for temple money to pay the temple tax. Temple money didn't have a picture of a king on it.

The temple tax was originally intended to be the equivalent of one day's wages. The problem was that after the money changers charged you for exchanging your money, it might cost you the equivalent of four or five days' wages.

It is one thing to provide a service for people. Workmen are worth of their hire. It is another thing to take advantage of people's situation so you can rip them off. Everyone was getting ripped off. Is anybody getting angry? If you aren't angry about this, Jesus is.

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. John 2:15 (ESV)

Jesus did something that only Jesus had a right to do. He personally declared war on the corruption. It was UFC cage fight time. Some of the commentators tell you the whip was a simple reed that Jesus used to gently escort the businessmen out of the temple. I don't think that is true. These guys were making a killing. They were not leaving unless they were forced to. I think Jesus whirled the whip around and people ran in fear. He was angry at corrupt consumer worship. This is a very different picture of Jesus than most of us have. We like the picture of Jesus turning water to wine. We don't like him clearing out the temple and going after corruption and deceit. The reason we don't like it is because we know that we are not much different from the money changers. We are not much different from the animal merchants. If something helps us financially or it makes us look good, we are willing to tolerate deceit and corruption. We don't want Jesus taking a whip to our lives.

Whenever we come to this passage, everyone has questions about anger. Let's talk about anger. When do we have a right to be angry? What is Jesus angry about? He is angry about God's honor, not his own honor. You see, when we get angry and raise our voice because something is wrong it is usually because we are insulted. We are dishonored. Husbands, you get angry and yell at your wife because she isn't living up to your expectations. We get angry when our pride is offended. Mom gets angry when her son misses the most important catch of the baseball game. Why is she angry? Her honor is insulted. Her pride needs to be swallowed. Her son didn't make her look like a star. We get angry because we are inconvenienced. We are insulted because we think our preferences and our right are important. I have news for you. We aren't that important. If it wasn't for Jesus choosing to love us, the only thing we deserve is eternal, never-ending, conscious punishment.

Do you want to get upset about something? Get upset when God's name is dragged through the mud. Get upset when people think about God, the church, corruption and getting ripped off. Get upset about people not being able to hear about Jesus because they don't have a church that preaches the Gospel or a church that teaches the Bible in a way they can understand. Get upset about people heading to hell because nobody who works with them told them about Jesus. Next time you are getting angry, ask yourself why you are angry. Is it because your honor was offended? Is it because you feel you have a right to not be inconvenienced? Is it because you think you deserve a life without difficulties?

Those are not things to be angry about. The reason we think we deserve grace and not wrath is because he don't have a biblical view of the depth of our sin and how offensive it is to God. Thank him for every good thing. Thank God the Father especially for Jesus because if it were not for him, we wouldn't have any good thing. Something to get angry about is God's reputation being tarnished.

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." John 2:17 (ESV)

The word zeal means having deep concern for the honor of something.

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this 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?" But he was speaking about 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. John 2:18-22 (ESV)

Interestingly, look how they challenge Jesus. They didn't challenge wrongness of what Jesus did, they simply didn't think he had the authority to make the changes. They didn't think Jesus had the authority to kick them out. It is almost as if they knew they were not supposed to be doing what they were doing in the temple, but because Annas, the high priest, gave them permission, they were doing it anyway. Who did Jesus think he was to trump the high priest's authority and kick them out? They said, "Prove to us you have the authority you are claiming."

I love what Jesus said. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Up to that point, the temple construction was under way for 46 years. It continued for another 20. Imagine what a place looks like when it is a 66 year

building project. The temple was huge. It was beautiful. It was intricate. It was one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Jesus loves irony. The Jews were baffled by his statement. How can Jesus redo a building project that was longer than most people's lifespan in only three days? Impossible! Here is where the fun comes in. The word in the Greek for temple doesn't necessarily mean physical building, it means the place where God dwells. I think when Jesus said this, he had his hands in the air. Everybody thought he was talking about the temple around him, but he was talking about the temple of his body. He was talking about his own death and resurrection. They wanted to see a sign that he had authority to kick them out of the temple, destroy the place where God dwells and the temple will be back in three days. Jesus said, "I am the real temple. I am the place God dwells. I am the place where people meet God. I am the one you pray to. I am the Passover lamb through which sin is atoned for."

In essence, Jesus didn't just take on the corruption in the Jewish religious system. He took on the whole Old Testament sacrificial system. All of the animals they sacrificed for sin, all of the holidays they observed to remember God's saving grace, all of the temple where they came to worship was obsolete. The massive temple could not do for them what only Jesus could accomplish. You cannot truly meet God in a building; you can only meet God through a person, Jesus.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. John 2:23-25 (ESV)

Apparently, a lot happened at this first Passover that is not recorded. Jesus performed many miracles. What was the purpose of these signs? They were the way Jesus proved his authority and showed God's character.

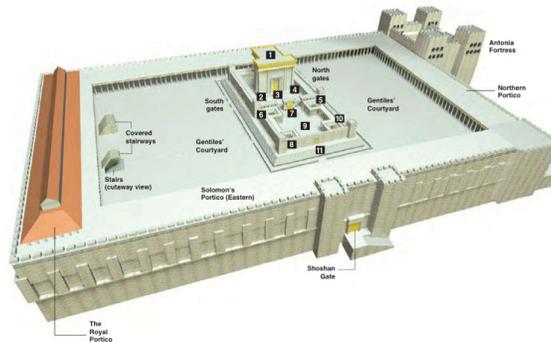
Jesus did miracles to prove he was the Christ. People placed their faith in him because the miracles proved he did things that only God can do.

It says that Jesus did not entrust himself to men. In other words, Jesus had great popularity. Jesus didn't fall into the popularity trap. He knows people are fickle. We will see this a number of times in John. For example, people followed Jesus because he fed 5,000 but when he followed it up by saying he is the real bread of life people people are hungry for, the crowds scattered like cockroaches with the lights on.

Worship that doesn't care about the lost

I told you we would talk about one other thing that happened in the temple that made Jesus angry. In Mark 11:17, it tells us the animal vendors and money changers were in the court of the Gentiles. As you can see in your bulletins, in the center of the temple was the Holy of Holies. Just outside of that you have the court of the men and the court

of the women. The people who were the farthest from God were the Gentiles. The court of the Gentiles was the massive open space in the center. If you were not of



Jewish descent, which incidentally, is all of us, the court of the Gentiles was the closest you could come to God.

In Jerusalem, at Passover, Gentiles, like Cornelius in Acts, came to honor God and pray. The only place they set aside for them to do this was the Court of the Gentiles.

Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. Zechariah 8:22 (ESV)

If you were a Gentile seeking God, this is the place you were to go. This is the place that was supposed to be paid for by all the Jewish men older than 19. The court of the Gentiles from all over the world seeking God.

What happened when they came to learn about God? They stepped into a county fair. It was like the food court at the mall. It was noisy. It was chaotic. It was business. All this was taking place in the one spot people came to find God.

What do you think the Gentiles were thinking about God as they walked out of the temple? "All God cares about is taking my money. It is the holiest day of the year. I thought somebody would talk with me. I thought somebody would pray with me. I thought somebody would help me find God. Nobody gives a darn about me." The Gentiles are walking out of the temple on the day that celebrates God's grace and they don't find it extended to their lives. Instead they think God is crooked, his people are ripoff artists and God is a joke. Is anybody getting angry? Does anybody see why Jesus is angry?

You see, God's people had become selfish. They thought worship was all about them. They thought it was about their traditions. Worship was reduced to a familiar ceremony of comfort. It was about a holiday with traditions to keep.

Folks, let me just love you a bit. Life is not about comfort; it is about God and his glory. God gets the greatest glory when we sacrifice to reach people for him, not when we celebrate Christian holidays. That is why in Luke 15 you get the only three-story parable in Scripture. The lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. The reason it is three stories, not just one, is like when you underline something in Scripture to show it is important. You repeat yourself. That story is triple-underlined. God gets glory when the lost are found. That is what we are about at Faith Church. We are not just about reaching our city. That is too small of a vision. We are about reaching our region for Christ. God gets much more glory when our sacrifice is to reach people of our region for Jesus than when our sacrifice is to make things more convenient for us during holiday worship.

We looked at what makes Jesus angry and it is about worship gone amuck. Before we close, let's look at what real worship at Faith Church looks like.

1. Real worship is shaking the hands of those seeking God rather than just my friends on Sunday.
2. Real worship is having the people seeking God over for dinner rather than just my relatives.

3. Real worship is a willingness to change the way we worship so we can better reach people who don't know Jesus rather than keep comfortable the people who have always known Jesus.
4. Real worship is a willingness to sacrifice my money, time and energy to launch campuses in our region even though we won't personally benefit from them. It is an issue of worship. It is an issue of God getting more glory, not me or my campus getting more glory.

That is real worship. Worship involves my sacrifice for God, his fame, his glory and focusing on reaching the lost brings glory to God. Worship that is about my glory, my convenience and that doesn't care about reaching the lost makes Jesus angry. Really, really angry.

Prayer

Jesus, we come to you tonight just repenting. It is so easy to drift into a worship that is convenient for us, a worship that is about our comfort and preferences. We just repent of that because we know it makes you angry. We want to be worshippers that joyfully sacrifice for you glory. We want to be worshippers that have your heart for the lost. We ask this in your name. Amen.



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