

The Temple of God

Sermon March 28, 2021 - Palm Sunday

Dear beloved, we all like to be appreciated, and to know that people are looking at us with love, kindness and appreciate who we are and what we do.

On Monday, I received two special phone calls.

The first came from CCC, Christian Council of Churches in Canada. They called me because, somehow, they heard about my involvement and our Calvin family's involvement in Ecumenism and how lovely our relationship is with other denominations here in the Forest Hill area. They asked me for a half hour interview. They appreciated how we, as ministers of different denominations, meet and work together as Christ's children for unity and for God's glory. Also, they heard about the effort we make for Christian Unity as we celebrate together the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The second phone call came from House of Friendship. They expressed their thankfulness for all the support we provided for the House of Friendship in the past years. Also, they heard about the special services we provide here on Zoom during the week, which sounds "unique" to them.

Also, I received quite a few text messages from Cuba, where our sisters and brothers received our financial help to build a worship place, and received some of our tokens of love during pandemic. In Cuba, our sisters and brothers are dealing with hunger and thirst, and they have great needs in these months. They are thankful for our support, and they assured us they keep us in their prayers.

As I received those two phone calls and these messages from Cuba, two Bible verses came into my mind during that conversation:

"You became imitators of the Lord. You – Churches in Forest Hill Kitchener - became a model to all the believers ... The Lord's message rang out from you not only in" ... Kitchener, but "your faith in God has become known everywhere". 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8

"You became a model to all the believers." 1 Thessalonians 1:7

Now, I am passing along all these kind words to you, the Calvin family, for all the good work we do together for the glory of God.

Thank you for your faithfulness, for your love and for serving our church and God's people with so much love. People, who see your love, appreciate you.

Now, let us see, what God says about us: The Bible says that **YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD!**

Did you know that you are the temple of God? What do you want to do here and now?

Put together these two pictures: the temple of Jerusalem and your body, your life, your whole being.

Jesus totally respected God's house. He taught there when he was 12 years old. He worshipped there with His disciples. He loved the temple of God.

As we know, during festivities, many arrived in Jerusalem from Israel, and immigrants, who lived in different neighbour countries, came to worship the Lord, the God Almighty. As they stayed in Jerusalem, they bought food for themselves and gifts for others. For this, the market around the church extended as much as it could. Everybody wanted to place their market table in a central place, which was closer to the church. Some people did not dare to set up their tables in the church. The priests tolerated this because sellers paid taxes to the church.

Try to imagine that, during the service, when the priest were preaching or the congregation was singing, the voices of sellers and buyers mixed with the sermon or singing.

“Great is thy faithfulness.... How much is that chicken? Can I get it for less?... **Morning by morning ...** How much is that ring Is that pure gold? **Thou changes not, Thy compassion ...** I was bidding on that first, step away ... don't push me

This is why the Lord Jesus made the effort on Palm Sunday to clean the church of God, turning their tables upside down, chasing the buyers and sellers out from the church.

Now, on Palm Sunday, please picture the peace-lover Jesus walking up and down the aisle, making a whip of cords. I assume some of his disciples asked Him:

- “Why do you do that?”
- “For what do you need that, Jesus?”

I assume, at the beginning, He did tell them the truth and He did not say, well, just wait and see. He told them that these people all know consciously the purpose of the temple but they do not respect God’s house as they should. He told them that this temple had to be cleansed.

I assume, also, that some disciples would say:

- “You are kidding Jesus, right? That’s not you.”
- “You would never hurt anybody.”
- “You tolerate people. You love us as we are, and I am sure you don’t want to harm anybody.”

Others would say:

- “Jesus, you are humble and gentle.”
- “You were healing people with your touch and now I cannot picture you with a whip in your hand.”
- “We cannot identify you with a whip.”
- “Come on Jesus, let’s rejoice, let’s have fun.”

What was Jesus’ answer? “I want to clean God’s house **and your life**. I want my Father’s house to be clean again. I want this temple to be a temple. I want your body to be the temple of God.”

Jesus Christ using a whip gives us a very serious message today.

1. As He respected God’s laws and God’s house, this is how we have to obey God, God’s house, and our being as God’s temple.

2. As he cleansed the Church 2,000 years ago, He wants to clean our body today, so we might be sanctified for God’s glory. He says: “If you want to be my disciple, if you want to be in heaven with me, you have to cleanse your body and your spirit from everything which is against God’s will.”

Years ago, I was asked to visit a person. Searching for the address, I arrived to a nice, luxurious house. When I entered, I was totally shocked. The whole house was full of shopping bags filled with all kind of shopping items. There were small aisles in the house but everything was covered with 1 metre high stuff in bags. I don't want to describe to you what kind of rodents I saw in the house running between stuff. After a few seconds, I excused myself and I left the house because I was not able to stay in it. I was wondering, "How can people live like that?"

Would you be able to live in a house like that? On TV shows, we saw some hoarders' homes. Often, those houses are so damaged that they have to be demolished to the ground.

Would you live in a house like that? NO?

However, we do.

In our bags are not stuff we purchased in the stores but different things like: hate; selfishness; arrogance; pride; idolatry; greed; love of money; complaining; not loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength; tempting God; high-mindedness; disobedience; witchcraft; lover of self; putting anything else above God; attachment to riches or material goods; and dozens of other things.

Jesus did not start to compromise with people. He wanted the whole church to be cleaned. He did not want to get into another argument about the importance of Church. He said: About this topic there is NO ARGUMENT, no flexibility, no negotiation.

Jesus does not compromise with us either. He wants our whole being.

In Acts 27, there is a story when Paul was on a ship sailing to Rome. The ship and the travelers were in a critical condition due to the weather. They were being pounded by the storm for days so violently that they began to throw the cargo overboard, and, on the third day, with their own hands, they threw the ship's tackle overboard.

Jesus Christ will not show up today here with a whip in His hands, but He is asking you now to clean your life, your mind and your spirit. Let's start to throw overboard all those things which are between us and God, everything that is

damaging our connection with the Lord, everything that is an obstacle between us and Jesus.

Do you have a feeling so far that your life is so full with all kinds of stuff that those things will take you down to the deep end? Do you realize that, if you don't reorganize your life, you will die just because you allowed so many things in your life? Have you come to the realization, that your eternal life is more important than some earthly short enjoyments? Do you count what is more valuable for you? Is your temporally life more important for you than your eternal life?

We all have things that we like, that we want, but we have to double check if God wants those, too.

Now, please think about it: What do you have to throw out from your own life?

Maybe bad words we should never use. Maybe our pride. Maybe our stubbornness, the desire that the last word should be ours. Let's throw them out!

If we keep our wrong values, they will take us down. Let us throw them away and we will be closer to God.

Today, the word of God is asking us to do three things:

1. clarify what is important for us and get rid of spiritual junk;
2. change our lifestyle to match with Christ; and
3. check ourselves daily to see if we are connected to Christ. Amen