

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, February 9th, 2025
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Wine and the Whip
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
John 2:12-25

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Let us sing and pray in God's presence.

Praise be to God!

For God has created the world and called it good.

Praise be to God!

In Christ, God has redeemed the world and defeated the powers of death.

Praise be to God!

The Holy Spirit is at work in the world, calling us to follow Jesus.

All praise and glory to God, Holy One and Holy Three!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God ever creating, ever loving, ever leading:
your presence is peace when we are frantic;
your Word is truth when we face deception;
your Spirit offers freedom when we are paralyzed by fear.
You give purpose in confusing times;
For all that you are, all that you have been, and all that you will be,
we worship you as the Source of Life,
the Promise of Redemption,
and the Spirit of Love in Action,
One God, now and always. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
 you call us to fullness of life but we confess our shortcomings.
 We have wandered from your ways and wasted your gifts;
 we have ignored your grace at work among us,
 and focused on loss and complaint.
 We have been suspicious of the motives of others,
 too quick to judge and too slow to forgive.
 Give us the courage to see clearly who and what we are.
 With your forgiveness, cleanse us from all our faults and failings,
 and inspire us to walk a new way.

Assurance of Pardon

God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
 As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is God's love;
 as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sins from us.
 Rejoice that God has forgiven you and opens a new future this day

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: "Jesus Strong and Kind"

Jesus said that if I thirst
 I should come to Him
 No one else can satisfy
 I should come to Him.

Chorus

For the Lord is good and faithful
 He will keep us day and night
 We can always run to Jesus
 Jesus, strong and kind.

Jesus said, if I am weak
 I should come to Him
 No one else can be my strength
 I should come to Him. (Chorus)

Jesus said, if I am lost
 He will come to me
 And He showed me on that cross
 He will come to me. (Chorus)

Responsive Reading

Psalm 138

¹ I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
 before the gods I sing your praise;
² **I bow down toward your holy temple
 and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness,
 for you have exalted above all things
 your name and your word.**

³ On the day I called, you answered me;
 my strength of soul you increased.
⁴ **All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O LORD,
 for they have heard the words of your mouth,**

⁵ and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
 for great is the glory of the LORD.
⁶ **For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly,
 but the haughty he knows from afar.**

⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
 you preserve my life;
 you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies,
 and your right hand delivers me.

⁸ **The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
 your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
 Do not forsake the work of your hands.**

Anthem (Music Ministry)

Prayer for illumination **(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

John 2:12-25

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² 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.

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Sermon

Mathew, Mark and Luke spend a lot of time describing the ministry of Jesus that takes place in the region of Galilee, John however tends to focus on the ministry of Jesus Christ that takes place in and around Jerusalem.

And in today's Scripture we see Jesus and his disciples have traveled from the wedding feast in Cana, to Capernaum where they spend a few days and then finally up to Jerusalem, to take part in the Passover. This should not come as a surprise to us, because it was a religious requirement for all men of age to visit the temple during Passover.

The city that would normally have between 200 – 300 thousand people visiting during the Passover, and this would mean that the Temple Mount was crowded, all of those people had business at the temple, and many would have brought animals to sacrifice for their sins.

Remember that every sacrifice had to be approved by the priests, it had to be a pure animal without blemish. And it had become a common practice in Jesus's day to just buy the sacrificial animal at the temple, because the priest would reject any animal people brought for the

smallest of reasons, buy their animal at a fraction of its value and insist that the person buy an approved sacrificial animal at an outrageous mark up.

Every person that visited the Temple Mount also had to pay a temple tax, that could only be paid in coins that were purchased at the temple, again at a marked-up exchange rate.

So, the temple courts transformed from a place of worship, into this huge outdoor market, especially the outermost court of the gentiles. If you walked into this place, it would be like visiting a county fair, people calling out prices, animals making their noise, and their smells, people talking and haggling. Not the quiet place of reverence you would expect it to be.

We also need to remember that this is not the first time Jesus has visited this fair, he was a good and faithful Jew, he had visited the temple during Passover his entire life. So, what was different this time, why did he react to the way he did this time?

Because his role had changed, he was no longer Jesus of Nazareth, he was now Jesus Christ, Son of the One True Living God, and he was doing his father's business and obeying his father's commands.

Jesus looked out on this county fair in the court of the gentiles, the animals, the money changers, things which all had become familiar and perfectly acceptable to the priests and the people of God. This is part of the problem in our world, once we see things enough, we accept them for being normal, even if they are not. The people of Jerusalem had probably pushed back against the Temple Mount, becoming a county fair at first, but over time it became normal and people no longer rallied against it. In fact it was sometime referred to as the court of Annas the High Priest because he was making so much profit off the trade that occurred there.

How could it be normal, how could it be acceptable to be walking up to prepare your heart to worship the One True living God, and hearing exchange rates being called out, the mooing of cows, the bleating of sheep, the cooing of birds and the haggling of people? How could that be acceptable?

The people did nothing about it, the priests did nothing about it, because it had been normalized, it had become acceptable. The thing is that it should not have been normal, it should not have been acceptable. So, Jesus Christ does something about it.

John 2:13-17

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

He made a whip of cord and drove them out of the temple, he drove out the people and the animals, he flipped the tables of the money lenders and drove them out as well. Saying, **'do not make my Father's house a house of trade.'**

Notice that the Scripture says that Jesus made a whip. This was not a reaction, this was planned, he took the time to gather up the cords necessary to make a whip, so that he could chase out the people who had infested the house of God.

Jesus cleaned out the people who had turned the house of God into a marketplace. Jesus Christ acting under the authority of God, drove out those who were spoiling the worship that was meant to occurring in the house of the Lord. Remember that if a gentile were to visit during Passover the only part of the temple that they could enter to worship God was the very court that was filled with all of these people. How was a gentile to worship, praise and revere God in a place like that?

Jesus Christ, right at the beginning of his ministry, visits the temple mount and cleanses the House of God.

Last week we saw a miracle of conversion, water turned into wine. A Symbol of the conversion that we are all suppose to experience when we become true Christians.

And what follows the conversion, cleansing.

This is how it works in God's kingdom; this is how the Holy Spirit works in us, first we are converted then we are cleansed. That is the only way it works; You cannot cleanse and then be converted. You do not have to clean up your life to be a follower of Jesus Christ, you do not take a shower just to take a bath. The Holy Spirit will help you clean up your life, but first you have to come to Christ and submit yourself to him, to be converted, so that the Holy Spirit can begin its work in you.

John shows us this right here in the second chapter of his Gospel through the telling of two tales, the wine and the whip. Both aspects of the work of Jesus Christ are true.

However, there are many people and churches out there who love the wine Jesus, the loving Jesus, the one who brings you love and joy, and they want nothing to do with the whip Jesus.

Yet the truth is that they come together.

There are also some people and churches who are on the other side, they adore the whip Jesus, and not so much the wine Jesus. They are concerned with cleansing, holiness and the removal of sins through any means necessary from people's lives. They are so concerned with the removal of sin from their lives that they miss out on the joy that Christ brings into peoples lives.

Jesus is the wine and the whip, he is both, he brings us happiness and joy in our conversion, he brings us goodness and joy into our lives, and he is also cleansing our life, setting things right according to his Word, making us holy.

The problem with many modern churches and people is that they only want a one-dimensional Jesus, the wine Jesus is by far the most popular. The one who lets them live their lives as they wish, without a care or worry, because Jesus loves them unconditionally. Or the other side that whips themselves day in and day out over the slightest infraction and expects everyone to live up to the impossible standards of the Scripture.

Jesus is much bigger than one dimension, he is joy and goodness, and he is concerned about the moral and ethical cleanliness of your life.

This might be hard for some of you to hear, but Jesus is concerned about your moral and ethical life, he is concerned about how you live and the decisions you make. He is concerned if you lie or tell the truth, if you steal or do not steal, if you cheat or not, he is concerned about how you conduct yourself in interaction with others, he is concerned with your relationship with others, your faithfulness and how you act sexually. He is concerned with all of it.

Why?

For the same reason he was concerned about the condition of the temple.

Everyone else that visited the Temple Mount that year just accepted the way it was, everyone else had accepted it as normal. Yet when Jesus Christ acting as the Son of God walked up to the Temple he said enough, this is not right, and I am going to do something about it.

Truthfully, we are all guilty of being like those visitors to the temple in our own lives. So many of us look at our lives and say everything is good, everything is normal, everything is acceptable, because we look at the world's standards. Standards that have changed and slide more and more away from the Biblical expectations we are meant to have in our lives. So, Jesus might look at our lives and say no, there is definitely some cleansing that needs to be done.

Spend some time in prayer and talk to God, talk about your life and ask him what cleansing need to be done, and be willing to listen to him, even if you do not like the answer. Then do as Mary told the servants and 'Do everything he tells you.' We often do not talk to Jesus about the cleansing we need in our lives because in our own minds we do not need to clean anything up.

We are like teenage boys. Teenage boys live in their rooms, they rarely leave their rooms and for that reason they become like caves, including a smell, an undesirable smell of 'boy room' and if you have smelt it, you know the smell I am speaking about.

Now if you were to question that boy about the smell, he would have no idea what you are talking about, because to him that smell has been normalized, he has become accustomed to it.

The same could be said of the smell in the homes of many pet owners. Over time we become so accustomed to it that it no longer offends us. Yet the truth is that it is offensive and it does need to be some cleaning done and maybe a window or two opened.

So even if we think there is no need to clean up our lives, we need to listen to the voice of God in our lives and recognize that we are in need of cleansing.

John speaks of the necessity of cleansing here in the beginning of Jesus's ministry and Matthew, Mark and Luke speak of another cleansing of the temple nearer to the end of Jesus's ministry. It is clear from the Scriptures that Jesus is always at work cleansing his temple. We might think we have been cleansed, but the truth is that there is always a little more cleaning that needs to be done, and we need to be faithful in doing so. As it says in the Psalms:

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

**²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!**

After witnessing this, the cleansing of the temple, the disciples remember that call for zeal of the house of God. And if Jesus had enough zeal for the house of God to take the time to fashion a whip out of cords and drive out all those who were dishonoring the house of God. How much more zeal do you think he has for your life, the house of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus, wants order, holiness and cleanliness in your life. If Jesus were to visit the temple of your heart today, what would he see? Would he see a lot of nonsense, foolishness, sin? Would he see a lack of obedience to the Scriptures, or perhaps a lack of zeal for sharing the Word of God?

This is why he has a zeal for cleaning up our lives.

He also has a zeal for the collective house of God, the Church and he is constantly at work cleansing it as well.

Finally, we reach the point where Jesus is confronted.

John 2:18-23

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² 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.

Jesus Knows What Is in Man

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

The religious leaders show up and demand Jesus explain himself. They demand that he prove his authority.

Think about that, they did not care that the house of God had become a fairground, a flea market.

The fact that he wanted the Temple court to be a place of praise, worship and reverence should have been sign enough. But instead, he tells them. **‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’**

Jesus is speaking about his death and resurrection. Something that the religious leaders cannot even begin to comprehend.

There is something else interesting happening here. They are at the temple, where there is the Holy Place and the Holy of Holy Places, where God dwelt. And at that time, the holy of holies sat empty, it was where the Arc of the Covenant had sat, a symbol of God among his people and it was empty as God himself stood among them in the court of the gentiles.

So, when Jesus says destroy this temple, he is really driving home the point that he is God incarnated, the Holy of Holies. These are the same religious leaders who will try to destroy the temple of his body in just a few more years when they crucify him for claiming to be the Son of God.

Did you notice that Jesus says he will raise himself from the dead. It is one thing to claim that God will raise you from the dead, but it is amazing to say that he will raise himself from the dead.

The disciples did not even understand this until after his death and resurrection. Notice again that it says that they believed the Scripture and the word. John is tying these two things together for a purpose, the Scripture is the Word of God, and we are to trust and obey in it.

John 2:23-25

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust

himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

So, while Jesus was there for Passover, he did many signs, and many people believed in his name. We do not know what signs he did, what miracles he performed, but John tells us that many people believed in him because of the signs that they witnessed.

We also see that Jesus did not commit himself all of them. They believed in his name, but they were not committed to him. When you commit yourself to Jesus, he commits himself to you.

He knew that in the crowds of people who claimed to believe in him, in their hearts that they were not committed, that they would leave him when things became too difficult, or that they would refuse to be cleansed, he knew that in the heart of hearts there was no real belief.

Our world is full of people that claim faith, claim Christianity, and they 'believe' in Jesus in name. However, Jesus Christ does not commit himself to that kind of Faith.

God needs commitment so that he can be at work in the temple of your heart.

We also see that Jesus did not need the crowds, he did not need the testimony of man, he knew human nature and he knew that they were fickle. John is once again making it clear that Jesus is God. He knows what is in man.

He knows what is in my heart, he knows what is in your heart, he knows what is in the heart of every person who has lived and who will ever live.

Jesus knows you inside and out, he knows your every thought and deed and he loves you. He wants to be part of every aspect of your life. He knows you perfectly, with all of your sin and flaws and he loves you.

And when you commit yourself to him, he will commit himself to you and the work will begin: conversion and then cleansing. Talk to God about it, ask him to search your heart and change the way you live.

Let him turn your heart into his temple, so that you can walk as the Salt and Light of his Word in this dark and broken world, sharing the love of God with others in our community.

Let us pray,

Our High Priest and Shepherd

We thank you with our whole heart,
O beloved Father,

for the precious blood of your dear Son,
 which he shed for our sake,
 and by which you daily cleanse, quicken, and sanctify us
 in your holy Church,
 and make us partakers of your divine nature.
 We thank you for the great and unspeakable love,
 though we were not worthy of it,
 when you redeemed us by your own Son,
 who is our High priest and Mediator,
 the true Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep of his flock,
 who now sits on your right hand
 and intercedes for us.
 O good and faithful God, Friend of all mankind,
 give us your grace and your great compassion,
 that we may praise you with your Son and the Holy Spirit
 in every act of our lives evermore.

Amen.

Source: Unknown, attributed to St. Augustine (d. 430)

Hymn #382: “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart,
 wean it from earth, through all its pulses move.
 Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
 and make me love thee as I ought to love.

Teach me to feel that thou art always nigh;
 teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
 to check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
 teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,
 one holy passion filling all my frame;
 the baptism of the heav’n descended Dove,
 my heart an altar, and they love the flame.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #485: “Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

Saviour, like a shepherd lead us;
 much we need your tender care;
 in your pleasant pastures feed us;
 for our use your folds prepare:
 blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!
 you have bought us; yours we are.
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!
 you have bought us, yours we are.

We are yours; in love befriend us;
 be the guardian of our way;
 keep your flock from sin, defend us;
 seek us when we go astray:
 blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!
 hear your children when we pray.
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!
 hear your children when we pray.

Let us always seek your favour;
 let us always do your will.
 Jesus Christ our only Saviour,
 with yourself our spirits fill:
 blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!
 you have loved us; love us still.
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!
 you have loved us; love us still.

Pastoral Prayer

God of grace and compassion,
 we bring before you the widening circles of our lives.
 We lift up those closest and dearest to us
 and name them before you with affection and gratitude:
 Thank you that your love reaches into the very depths of their needs
 and gives them strength for their journeys.

Holy and loving God,
 We are in awe of your goodness.
 We know in our hearts the tug of our common humanity,
 as well as the boldness of your Spirit to respond to those who suffer
 and make a difference wherever we can.
 We offer these prayers and the unspoken prayers of our hearts
 in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the grace of God,
freely given through Christ, our Lord,
and sufficient for all our needs, and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
who testifies with our spirit
that we are God's children,
guide and sustain us this day
and forever. **Amen.**