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# Keeping the Temple Clean

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 25 February 2024

Exodus 20:1-17 • 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 • John 2:13-22

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May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

Here in (over at) Prebbleton we're repairing and repainting the church. The work has been going well and the church is going to look great when it's finished. There have been a few issues over the years, as usually happens in old buildings. Several sections of weatherboard have had to be replaced, due to the usual suspects: borer and dry rot. Some of those we knew about, others were surprises. So there have been some adjustments in the work along the way, and a bit of extra time spent where we didn't expect it. You don't know what's beneath the surface until you probe a little bit, and that is what we have discovered here (there).

The integrity of the building, or the integrity of a person, is not always to be determined from what you see on the surface. Fortunately, the basic structure of the All Saints' church building is strong, and the problems can be repaired. But as Jesus tells us in today's Gospel and a few related passages, our bodies

are like buildings — temples, to be specific. What is inside us is not always obvious to other people, and it is what is inside us that counts.

Jesus speaks about rebuilding the temple, and it is his own body he is talking about. By extension, our bodies are temples too. You have probably heard this said many times, that your body is a temple. It is a temple because it is the shell which holds your life, your soul and your very essence. Nothing is more precious than life. It is the one thing which only God can create.

Because your body is a temple, it deserves to be kept clean — meaning not just free from dirt, but pure, taking in only what is right and healthful, whether food or ideas. This has always been a focus in God's instruction to humanity. Jews were given the purity laws about what they could eat and what they could not. Jesus overturned those laws, declaring that all foods are clean; but the preciousness of life remains, and the body is still a temple. In our Gospel passage, Jesus clears the temple building of pollution, in the form of greedy moneychangers and merchants; after which he immediately refers to his own body as a temple. The connection is clear. Our bodies must also be kept free of pollution, whether physical or moral.

When Jesus declared all foods to be clean, he prioritised the moral over the physical:

Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them ... For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person. (Mark 7:15, 21-23)

Our own hearts are polluted, and what comes out of our mouths will reflect that uncleanness. A jealous or mean heart cannot be concealed; it will reveal itself in that person's speech. Jesus taught us that we must purify our minds and our hearts (Jews believed that the heart is where thoughts reside), so that what comes out of our mouths will be pure also.

Because life is the most precious thing, a gift from God which no one else can truly give, the eternal life which Jesus promises us must be the greatest gift ever. If we truly believe in God and Christ and the Spirit, our hearts will be clean and will remain so forever, as we live in the love of God.