

Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover—along with all other good Jews

Passover was a big deal—it celebrated liberation, freedom, and rescue from slavery

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt—working at hard labor under the Egyptian overseers

When the Angel of Death passed over Egypt, killing every first born son

The Israelites that put the blood of the lamb on their doors were exempt

They were to eat roasted lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs

The blood of the lamb on the door was a sign they followed God's instructions

When the firstborn son of Pharaoh and the firstborn son of all Egyptians were killed

Pharaoh sent the Israelites out of Egypt to freedom

The Israelites were to celebrate this Passover feast and resulting freedom every year

People came from all over to celebrate the Passover in the temple in Jerusalem—it was very crowded

The temple was the center of life in Israel—in ways that the church as we know it never was

And I don't mean just because we live in a post-Christian world

Temple was the center of worship and music, of politics and society, of celebration and mourning

But above all that it was the place where Israel's God dwelt and spoke to the people

For the Israelites, everything centered on the Temple

The crowds were immense around the Temple during Passover

People needed food and a place to stay—so it was a profitable time for the businesses

But they also came to the Temple to do their Jewish rituals, offer sacrifices and pay a Temple tax

Those who had come from a long distance, couldn't bring sacrificial animals with them

Therefore, businesses had them for sale—for a nice profit!

But not only did they need to buy animals—they needed the right kind of money

In the Temple only Temple shekels were allowed

All foreign money or Roman money was deemed unclean and unusable

Again—businesses met the need and exchanged money—for a nice profit!

For the poor that was a real problem as demand was great and prices reflected that

The practice of selling sacrificial animals and exchanging money was ok

It was the way in which it was done—at the expense of the people, especially the poor

The Temple, the priests, and the businesses were getting rich

This was not what God intended for this “place where God dwelt”—the Temple

Jesus appears for the Passover and sees what is happening—it only takes a glance to know it is wrong

But the crowd is so large and there is so much happening all over the place that no one hears

People, animals, children—and people selling their items

Jesus can't yell loud enough to make a real difference in this crowd

So, he picks up cords and puts them together as a whip, intending to dissipate the crowd

A well placed crack of the whip causes the animals to stampede and run away

In the process, tables are overturned, food is spilled, money scatters, people run

It quickly ends the business for the day!

Not only was the place a mess—the animals were gone—it was a free for all

He specifically tells the dove merchants to leave

Doves were for the poor that couldn't afford a lamb or a cow

Jesus condemns them for turning the Temple—“God's House”—into a marketplace

After the ruckus begins to settle, the merchants try to gather up what is left—while muttering at Jesus!

They didn't ask for an explanation—nor condemn him for his actions

They knew they were out of hand and had pushed their limits

But they didn't like being called on it and they didn't like losing their profitable income

So they asked about Jesus authority to take such action— “Who are you to do this?”

Jesus doesn't answer them directly— “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”

That makes them mad—this Temple—the center of our lives—took 46 years to build

But they miss the point... Jesus is pointing them to something new here—

The Temple as they know it is corrupt and no longer serves its purposes

Jesus—the Logos—the Logos made flesh—the Lamb of God—is the new Passover

Jesus' death and resurrection is the reality to which the Passover points

They don't understand it yet—but Jesus gives new meaning and purpose to Passover

The intended purpose of the Temple was being abused so Jesus confronted them

The intended purpose of Passover was being abused so Jesus confronted them

I wonder if Jesus were here today, what he would confront

Where have we gotten off track and lost our way? Forgotten our purposes?

Where do we benefit at the expense of others?

But also... Where do we stop short of living into our full potential and purpose?

Our attitudes toward the poor and homeless—the forgotten people

God made provision for the poor—yet the people didn't always follow God's Leadings

Same today—we scramble to avoid paying taxes and helping those who have less

Creditors use any means, even illegal, to force people to pay

We released the slaves, yet our systems perpetuate systemic racism

Passover celebrated liberation, freedom, and rescue from slavery,

Yet it had become anything but liberation, freedom, and rescue from slavery for others

It is my good news, not your good news! My freedom, not your freedom!

But Passover was also about being the people of God—a people that followed God

We gather as a people of God—we gather to worship and we bless each other as ministers

How do our purposes as North Seattle Friends Church impact our decisions?

About the building, our finances, our energy and time?

We enjoy a huge benefit in not paying property taxes—because we're a public benefit

How do we see ourselves as a public benefit?

Is our good news, good news for others?

Jesus calls us to focus on God's purposes, not our own

When Jesus answers with, “Destroy the temple, and in three days I will raise it up”

He is looking to God's purposes, rather than human purposes

It isn't the building, it's the people that gather to become a people of God

Let's follow God's purposes in our lives—all the time

We ask the same thing personally about everything—home, car, money, life, job, recreation, 401(k)

What is its intended purpose? Am I being faithful to that intended purpose?

But it isn't always minimalist—the gift of hospitality needs space to welcome others

Sometimes things go beyond their purpose—Job and 401(k) become my security

Recreation/Vacation—too little and we're not re-created or too much and we escape life

When it gets out of bounds—call it back to its intended purpose—that it might live into its purpose well!

It is a constant repurposing and Listening to how we are to be faithful to live out our purposes