



Thoughts on the Journey...

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It was a Thursday evening when I walked in the house. It was the end of my work week and I was looking forward to a day off. I set my purse down, hung my coat in the closet, and walked into the other room. There it was! a scene that made me want to turn around and head back out the door: dirty dishes in the sink that were accompanied by some fruit flies, school books on the floor, old socks sticking out of the couch cushions, an empty pizza box propped open on the coffee table, and enough dust on the furniture for it to grow legs and start hopping around the room. It's not the first time things had gotten this raunchy, but something set me off that night and sent me in a rage of righteous indignation. I went from a slow simmer to a rapid boil in about three minutes flat. It didn't take long for my kids to know I meant business. I didn't have a whip, I didn't turn over tables, but my volume had enough punch in it to get my kids moving and snapping them into action. I've never been a neat freak, but this had gone way beyond the usual day-to-day lived-in look for a household of four people. This had reached a point of disregard and disrespect. It didn't get like this in a day. Rather, it was a breakdown in the overall regard for others living in the house that took its toll over time.

I couldn't help but think of this past incident in my home when I was reading the scripture readings for this third Sunday of Lent. There was something about the whip-snapping angry Jesus in the gospel of John that I could relate to when it came to zeal for his house.

Passover was near, so as was the custom, Jesus went to Jerusalem. As he walked into the temple area, there were merchants selling oxen, sheep, and doves,. There were also money changers contributing to the overall chaotic scene. Jesus was enraged at the disrespect and lack of reverence for this holy temple.

“He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, “Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace.”

The merchants and money changers in the temple created an atmosphere that did not honor the intention of that holy place. Their selfish motivations created a diminished reverence that angered Jesus. Jesus was also fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy by his actions but, at the same time, wanted to catch the crowds attention and send a clear message about respecting the temple of the Lord. Disorder, and chaos play a big role in distracting us from our focus and pull our attention from things of relevance; disorder and chaos, when left to continue, create more disorder and chaos.

So is true, not only for temples made of stone and mortar, but also for our personal temples made of flesh and bone. In the reading from Exodus this weekend, God delivered his commandments to his people who's lives were disordered and chaotic. The commandments were not given to keep people from having a good time, but to restore personal order and give them direction—a road map back to the Father. Those very commandments were not only given to the Israelites all those centuries ago, but they are given to us today. If we read them carefully and take time to think about the consequences of breaking them before we actually break them, we can understand how each one of them were given to us in love to keep us from the pain of our human selfishness.

Take a moment to reflect on the times in your life when you have sinned, regardless of which command you violated. That sin has either been disrespectful to you or someone else - probably both. Sin compromises our sense of right and wrong and makes it easier to sin again. The end result corrupts what is at the heart of the commandments: love for God, love for neighbor, love and respect of self. Love is at the heart of those commands. Like the Israelites, like the temple, like my home, like the temple of our souls, over time the selfishness and lack of respect and order affects our morale, our sense of community. It contributes to insecurity, suspicion, fear, and lack of self respect as it relates to God who calls us his beloved. God does not want these things for us. He wants us to be happy. In his love for his people, he has given us clear direction. Obedience to his will is what restores order and peace to our lives.