

## “Tough Love” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 3 March 3, 2024

- I. **John 2:13-22** previously read
- II. **We all experience disruptions every day.**
  - a. Just think of the winter storm that hit in January... many of you went without power, or had pipes freeze, dealt with falling trees, or couldn't get out of the house for days.
  - b. Every time I book travel plans, it occurs to me that we might have a flight disruption because of weather or even a mechanical issue.
    - i. Last summer, when I went to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I got rerouted and delayed for a day and half because of weather.
  - c. Weather causes disruptions all the time, but how about getting sick?
    - i. It never fails that we have some big even planned – a dinner with friends, tickets to a show, or a stay at the coast – and we get sick.
    - ii. Cough, fever, sore throat... and we know that the whole thing is off.
    - iii. It seems like the bigger the event and the more planning that went into it, some kind of cold or flu hits us without fail.
  - d. Almost anything we do can have a disruption that stops us from our plans... car breakdowns, road construction, businesses unexpectedly closed, or the dreaded – “we don't have any milk” when a recipe calls for it.
  - e. However, sometimes we find out that the disruption was a benefit somehow.
    - i. The flat tire kept us from something much worse down the road.
    - ii. The cold we got that canceled a dinner party saved us from food poisoning.
    - iii. The delay in receiving a letter kept us from responding to a situation too soon.
    - iv. The scan for a minor problem detected another problem early enough to prevent a health disaster.
  - f. All of these disruptions stop us in our tracks, and usually it is our plans and designs that are put on hold.
- III. **Jesus disrupts the entire temple in our Gospel lesson.**
  - a. He goes up to Jerusalem for the yearly Passover remembrance and meal.
  - b. The Passover was one of three feasts that Jews were required to attend in Jerusalem... and thousands of people showed up.
  - c. The travel was slow and difficult in those days, and it was quite a burden to bring any more than was necessary.
  - d. Each pilgrim needed to bring along a sacrifice, or they needed to buy it when they arrived in Jerusalem.

- i. It's hard to say whether these animals for sacrifice were sold throughout the city, but in this story, vendors set up inside the temple grounds... kind of like what our parking lot is to our church.
- ii. Not only that, but if these visitors wanted to make an offering, they needed to exchange their currency for the one used at the temple.
  - 1. In the U.S., we don't think about exchanging currency too much, but when we traveled to Guatemala and Honduras the exchange rate was important.
    - a. When we needed to get the right currency, if you used a bank they gave pretty good rates, but if you used a random guy at the border, you might pay much more for the transaction.
  - 2. The pilgrims in Jerusalem were just trying to tithe, and the money changers were profiting from that!
- e. You can imagine the chaotic scene that Jesus came upon that day.
  - i. Animals, crowds and lines of people waiting to get their lamb for the Passover, temple guards and religious leaders were all coming and going.
  - ii. When Jesus comes upon this scene, it stirs up a "zeal that consumed Him," and He disrupted the whole thing.
  - iii. Jesus is upset, and dare we say angry, over the money changing hands, the sale of sacrificial animals, and the way that God's design for the temple was being abused.
- f. Jesus was not the person we normally teach about... He literally made a whip, overturned tables with money on them, and drove out the animals and the vendors.
  - i. The status quo for the Passover was for pilgrims to get to Jerusalem, purchase a lamb for the Passover Meal, then exchange their money for an offering – and Jesus disrupted all of that with a show of force that no one expected.
  - ii. Jesus is kind... He is loving... He is peaceful... He is pure... He is gentle... and He is angry?
    - 1. It doesn't go well with our understanding of Him, but yes, sometimes Jesus is angry in righteous judgment... and He is not content with people sinning against God.

#### IV. **Jesus is more than a friend.**

- a. I know we like to think of Him as our friend and a kind shepherd, loving us through our ups and downs.
  - i. This picture is what much of the Bible tells us – but do we overlook the places that Jesus was not friendly... but confrontational?
  - ii. When a Pharisee or religious leader was unloving and using God's law to cause harm, Jesus confronted them with truth.

- iii. When people were not in line with God's will, Jesus would quickly correct them – including Peter.
- iv. Just read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 to 7 and you will see how the teachings of Jesus are very difficult – even confrontational to our own thoughts, words, and deeds.
- b. Again, Jesus was not content with just letting things go... He would meet sin and brokenness head on and bring it to an end.
  - i. Often when healing people, He began by forgiving their sins... then healing the problem.
    - 1. The forgiveness of sins was the most important part of the equation – because these people would die someday, and Jesus wanted them to have faith in Him.
    - 2. He didn't let their sins go as if it didn't matter – like when Jesus told the woman caught in adultery, "Go and sin no more."  
(John 8:11)

V. **Jesus tells us the same thing – "Go and sin no more."**

- a. In the same way that disruptions come into our lives, changing the course of our plans... Jesus comes into our lives, confronting us with our sin.
- b. Jesus disrupts our pride and arrogance as we forge ahead without a thought to our sin and lack of faith.
- c. In people with addictions and destructive behaviors, they need tough love.
  - i. This means that we don't enable the person to continue down the path of destruction – but we intervene... we disrupt... we confront.
  - ii. It's always painful for the person who must change in order to live.
  - iii. However, the only way they can live is to stop the behavior and turn to God.
- d. Jesus is the master of intervention, and He's no pushover just because He loves us more than we could imagine.
  - i. Some people think love means we allow people to do whatever they want without consequence... but don't count on that with God.
  - ii. At times, He brings us face-to-face with our sins, and He might just overturn our table in a shocking display of anger.
- e. As much as we hate this kind of disruption, it is for our good...

VI. **Jesus steps into our lives so we can be free from the power of sin.**

- a. When the Jews asked Him about His authority to do these things, He basically told them something new was coming – and it would not be a temple and sacrifices.
- b. The new way is Jesus taking the place of all those sacrificial lambs to be the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)
  - i. Jesus disrupted these people from their understanding of what God is like, and even what He wanted them to do, and showed them His vision for the future – a sacrifice who would die and rise again.

- c. Jesus wants more than anything to provide us with the forgiveness He won on the cross...and through the empty grave – and He does that through our faith in Him.
  - i. However, Jesus wants nothing to tempt us away from Him – to sin against Him – or for us to pridefully go our own way.
- d. As Jesus drives out the sin and brokenness from our lives, be glad and rejoice, because He loves us enough not to leave us where we are...
  - i. Our tough love Jesus is the real Jesus – disrupting our sin so that one day, we will receive the crown of life. Amen.