

Oculi – Third Sunday In Lent

March, 4th 2018

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John 2:13-22 ¹³ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. ¹⁵ When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" ¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." ¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ Then the Jews 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 of the temple of His body. ²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

"Hallowed be Thy name."

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy all by itself, but we pray in this petition that we also keep it holy.

How is God's name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as children of God also live a holy life according to it. Help us do this, dear heavenly Father.

But whoever teaches and lives contrary to the Word of God dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, heavenly Father.

Which is the greater sin? Murder, adultery, or disrespect? To men it seems like the least of sins, but God says that disrespect for authority, especially his authority, that is the chief sin.

This is the first petition and the first commandment (actually the first three, and the fourth also), for this is the chief thing. Wherever people honor and respect God's name they will listen to His Word, repent of their sins and live lives of repentance, but wherever they do not respect or honor his name, they will do as they like, and every form of greed, avarice, and sin will abound.

Notice how every one of Luther's explanations to the other commandments, begins in this way, "We should fear and love God" because if you do not fear and love God then you have no reason to do anything except what you think is best for you. And so now we have a TV show that makes a hero out of a man who murders and kills people, because he thinks he has just cause. We also have real life people who are traitors and leak information that put their neighbors lives in jeopardy, yet again our society idolizes these people. All of this and so much more because there is no fear of God and therefore everyone is free to act as they think and feel is best "everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

To refuse to "hold God's name as holy" ie to refuse to respect his authority and word, is the root of all evil.

Many ascribe this to money misquoting the scripture but the disrespect for God's name (and His word) is truly the root of all other sin. Even in our text this came first because the Chief Priests did not have any treasure in heaven they sought earthly treasure instead.

Therefore since this is the chief commandment, it is good and right that this is the sin which Christ confronts, publicly and violently. There are many other sins which the Lord "passes over," the adulterous woman, the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus coming to him at night, even His own betrayal at the hands of Judas. He doesn't ignore these sins, but neither does He deal with them in this way. Many of these things we would say are worst sins but that is because we do not understand the heart of things.

That rebellion against God is the heart of all sin.

Not only is this the chief sin but this sin was being committed by the high priests, the leaders. If a citizen commits a sin the government is there to punish him, but when the leaders do what is wrong there is no one to bring them to justice. So the Lord must confront them. They are not only committing it but doing so openly and leading many others to do the same.

A couple weeks ago we had someone put doughnuts and fliers for their business in our foyer, and some questioned that. And I agree it's not really a good thing to do, because we don't want our foyer to become a community bulletin board, nor do we want to give the impression that we as a church are promoting one business above another. But what happen then really has nothing to do with what is going on in our text. The doughnuts in the hallway caused no interruption of service, weren't not disrespectful of God's name or word, and were not an attempt to buy or sell the free grace of God. Yet in our text all of these things were happening.

Imagine if instead of putting the doughnuts on a table outside, they were walking up and down the aisle shouting during the service. In our text they were selling these things not outside the temple, but in the outer temple, where people would be gathering to try and worship

Imagine again they weren't selling doughnuts but something you needed for worship, for example if you came up to receive the lord's supper but you had to pay \$20 for the wine and another \$10 for the wafer, so that in essence you had to pay to receive the forgiveness of sins which Christ freely offers to all. Again in our text the chief priests were not only selling but selling at exorbitant prices the sheep and oxen that the people needed to offer as a sacrifice.

Imagine again it is my wine and bread you are buying, so that all the profit goes to me the pastor. So that I was then profiting and I was using my position of authority to line my own pockets with earthly wealth. Woe to me, if I were to do such a thing. Yet this is what the Chief priests were doing.

Not only were they doing all these things, but they were openly doing it, and they the Chief priests who were supposed to be the spiritually leaders of the people, were spitting on the name of God, the worship of God and the Word of God in full view of all the nations.

Jesus rightfully responds in zeal for the Lord's name, house and word. He rightfully uses violence to bring judgment on such a heinous sin.

At the same time we must recognize that although Christ clearly has the right and authority to confront them with their sin, even to confront them with violence (although Christ holds back in this case, causing no harm to man or beast) we most certainly do not.

If the Chief Priests were to ask you, what authority you have, or what sign you do, what could you answer them? Can you raise yourself from the dead to prove your authority? Certainly not. Therefore we have no authority ever to commit any such violence. Even if we see others doing what is not right but only must report them to the proper authorities. If breaking the laws of the land, we call the police - if breaking the laws of God, we tell the church.

If we were to react in this way, to use any kind of violence in such a situation, we would be guilty of dishonoring God's name more than they. Unless of course we were authorized to do so by the government such as a police man or soldier.

So we see here in our text that we should not, disrupt the worship of the Lord, attempt to sell the gifts of God, or in any other way use God's name or God's word to make money for ourselves.

But what we should do is honor God's name, His word and worship service. So that each of us submits fully to God's will, not doing what we think is best, but doing what God tells us in His word and through His representatives.

Most importantly, God's name is kept holy, when we put our trust and faith in Jesus Christ. For Jesus is the temple of God, He is the place where God has revealed His name to us. This is what Jesus means when He says "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days." The temple at Jerusalem was the place where God revealed His name, and the place where He came to His people. But no more, Christ now is our temple. It is through Him that God's name is revealed, it is through Him that God comes to us.

Listen again to what Jesus tells the chief priests, "destroy this temple . . ." Later at his trial men will accuse Jesus of threatening to "destroy the temple" but this was a lie. Jesus never threatened to destroy the temple, instead he said, "You will destroy the temple." Actually what he said is an imperative, really more of a challenge or a dare, "you want a sign, go ahead destroy this temple, I know you want to." And they did desire it. They so despised God and his word that they desired with all their hearts to destroy the very Messiah they had waited so long for.

And so do we. "don't murder, don't steal . . ." ok we understand those commandments and recognize that those are a good thing to do. But to keep God's name holy? To fully and completely submit ourselves to His authority and the authority of His representatives, so that we do what He commands even when it doesn't seem like a big deal to us. To honor His name and His word, so that we gladly and willingly come to church and regularly use the sacraments and make devotion and prayer the first thing in our daily life.

This seems like not a big deal to us, yet when we rebel against God we are destroying Jesus, who is the temple and the name of God, as surely as those Chief priests.

Yet Jesus says what you have destroyed I will rebuild and I will rebuild it for the sake of you the very ones that destroyed. And He did this not for His sake, but for ours.

God's name is certainly holy all by itself, there is nothing we can do to destroy Him, but we pray in this petition thanking Jesus that He willingly was destroyed for our sin and rebuilt for our justification and that when we attempt to destroy God and His word through our sinful rebellion He would rebuild His temple in our hearts, teaching us to rejoice in His love, His forgiveness and His word. Amen