



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of January 16, 2022 (John 2:13-22)

Prayers for Groups & Personal Devotion:

Oh, powerful, mysterious, confounding, and yet loving, gracious, and nourishing God: We come before you today in awe. Breathe life into us now. [pause]

We thank you, Lord, for giving us spaces to gather, both in-person and online, to worship you, to reflect on your story, and to love one another and hold one another up.

We thank you that your spirit and therefore your love, know no bounds. And it is not lost on us that we are free to worship you, loud and proud, whenever and wherever we want is a freedom not all on your earth enjoy. Lord, watch over and protect those who worship you at great risk.

And thank you Lord for showing up in the flesh, dwelling with us, and standing up against broken and often harmful systems- for fighting for the little ones, the left out, the

Devotions for Life A LifeGroup Resource

The Story: John 2:13-22

Context: This week's story is one of a few that show up in all four Gospels, though it shows up very differently in the Gospel of John. In the other Gospels is part of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the day we call "Palm Sunday". But in John it shows up at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, his second public act, rather than towards the end. The implications of this are worth wondering about. Also, it serves as an important time marker. Jesus is coming into Jerusalem for the Passover, and he does this three times in John's Gospel. This is



how we get to Jesus' ministry lasting three years: Three Passovers equals three years. In the other Gospels we get no clues about how much time passes. This is also an important story, because it dispels the myth that Jesus was merely this kind, gentle, Mr. Rogers like man. He was at times, to be sure, but he also got angry and

overlooked and under-served. Compel us to do the same. May we embody you for the world as makers of peace and laborers for justice. Give us the courage and persistence for the long road. And most of all, keep us centered in your love. Amen.

Acts of Compassion & Justice:

- This Monday is Martin Luther King day. If you have not ever done so, consider reading his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. (Search it online and you should find it in its entirety pretty easily or it is likely available at the library). It's a long, but an important read, especially for white Christians like many of us. Then just ruminate on it this week. What might it be saying to you or calling you to?
- This month we are collecting socks and underwear for Simpson Housing Services. As you have the means consider contributing to our efforts. Just drop them off at church when you come to worship or during office hours. You may also have them shipped.
- Simpson Housing Services has a great resource on their website for numerous ways to get educated about and active in these matters. Go to: simpsonhousing.org/who-we-are/advocacy/ and get engaged!

engaged in acts of civil disobedience, but did so carefully, strategically, and purposefully.

Reading the Story: Again, today's story is not long, but it packs a big punch (almost literally). As with any story, make sure you're following the action. Who is doing and saying what? Who is responding to whom and how? And why are people doing and saying the things they are. Since it's short, consider reading through it multiple times. What jumps out to you? What questions do you have?

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

- If you could ask a Biblical scholar one question about this story, what would it be?
- There is a version of this story in all four Gospels, but in Matthew, Mark, and Luke it comes very near Jesus' crucifixion. Why do you think it's so early in John's Gospel? What do we make of this difference?
- Another difference in John's telling versus the other Gospels is that in John Jesus uses the word "marketplace" (verse 16) rather than "den of robbers" as he does in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What is the difference here? And how, if at all, does it change the story?
- How do you feel about Jesus in this story? How do you think you would respond if you were there?
- Why do you think Jesus is so upset, especially considering that the law commands that animals be offered as a sacrifice?
- How do we square this story with Jesus words (albeit in Matthew) calling us to be peacemakers?
- What is civil disobedience? Why do people do it? What effect/impact does it have?
- What kinds of things about the Christian Church today might stir up anger in Jesus?

