

St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)
Trinity 10 – August 4, 2024
Luke 19:41-48 – Outrage and Peace
Rev Peter Wagner

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, Jesus is outraged. He enters the temple in fierce anger, to cleanse it and drive out the moneychangers with a whip.

Outrage is perhaps the most popular emotion in America today. Each week brings at least one news cycle of outrage. Social media erupts, until the next thing happens, and a new cycle begins. Last week it was the transgender nonsense at the Olympics, drag queens at the opening ceremony who seemed to be acting out the Lord's Supper, and then someone who seemed to be intersex or trans in the women's boxing tournament. Who knows what it will be next week.

What we really need is outrage with wisdom, within its proper context and vocation, outrage to protect the church, balanced with compassion for those who are going astray. What we need is a champion who will carry out God's righteous anger in justice and truth.

That champion is Jesus Christ. Today he cleanses the temple in rage and violence, overturning tables and scourging the moneychangers. But before he enters the temple, he looks upon Jerusalem in compassion and pity, weeping over his beloved city. "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!"

The tender pity of Jesus is for the sheep, those who are being led astray. But his outrage is for the leaders, the false shepherds and wolves in sheep's clothing. Throughout the gospels, Jesus always has compassion on the lost and ignorant crowds, but fierce anger for the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees.

And notice that outrage in Scripture is always reserved for direct attack on the church, for those who harm God's people from within or without. It's bad when the heathen nations carry on in sin and immorality, but the outrage is when they oppress God's people. It's bad when the nations worship their false gods, but the outrage is when Israel joins them. And it's bad when the children of Israel fall into sin, but the outrage is when they listen to the lying prophets, telling them their sin is of no consequence.

The worst outrage is when hypocrites and deceivers inside the church lead God's people astray. God will not tolerate those who make his church a byword among the nations, who bring disgrace to his pure bride. Within the church, Phineas took up his spear against his fellow Israelite, a man who knew God's law and counted himself a member of the household of God, but who flagrantly rebelled in sexual immorality. Jesus made a whip and drove out not the foreigners, but the Jewish moneychangers within the house of God, who were deliberately turning it from a house of prayer to a house of greed.

So Jesus embodies the anger and mercy of God. He has pity on the lost, wrath on their enemies. When he weeps over Jerusalem, he weeps because of their unbelief, that they do not recognize him, their saving God. He knows the horrible consequences of their unbelief, what will happen to the city forty years later during the terrible siege of Vespasian. Consequences of Roman conquest, not one stone of the temple left upon another, and terrible starvation and slaughter.

But then, abruptly, Jesus enters the temple, and his pity turns to wrath. He drives out the moneychangers in the temple courts who were taking advantage of the people, profiteering from their piety, charging an exorbitant exchange rate from Roman currency to the temple currency needed to buy sacrificial animals. They had turned the house of prayer into a den of robbers.

Yet Jesus is angry about far more than just a few greedy moneychangers. He's angry with those who have perverted this whole temple sacrificial system, telling the people they can appease God by the blood of goats and bulls. His outrage is against everything the moneychangers represent, the whole empty religion, the whole scheme of trying to satisfy God's wrath by doing something for him, rather than coming before him in humble repentance and faith.

So behold your God, in his righteous anger. This is no meek lamb, no storybook Jesus, no wimpy pacifist. Jesus with a whip of cords overturning tables is a vision of judgment day, the Son of Man in glorious triumph. Here is the lion of Judah, the commander of the armies of heaven, the King of kings and Lord of lords, arising to defend his people. Here is Samson, filled with the Holy Spirit, turning in rage against the Philistines, slaughtering them with a donkey's jawbone. Here is Joshua, destroying Ai and devoting it to destruction. Here is David, furious

with all who would defy the armies of the living God, hurling his stone at Goliath, so that it sinks into his forehead. Today he scourges the moneychangers in the court of the Gentiles, tomorrow he will scourge the nations with a rod of iron.

Because he loves his people, his church. Deeply and tenderly, he loves them. Therefore he cannot stand by when they are led astray by the outrageous lie of earning God's favor by their own sacrificial efforts. He will save them from false religion. He will bring them to true faith in himself, the only true sacrificial Lamb of God.

He loves them so much that in just a few more days, he who scourged the moneychangers will submit himself to be scourged and mocked and nailed to a cross. He will hang dying outside the city walls, offering himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the greatest outrage of all, they crucified the Son of God, but through that outrage, Jesus made peace with God for you. For the blood of goats and bulls can never atone for sin, but the blood of God atones once for all. Jesus will enter the temple once for all as our great high priest. He will offer his own blood to purify your hearts and purchase you for himself as his true living temple, a people for his own possession, his beloved bride.

Learn from all this that righteous anger does have its place, within its proper vocation. Jesus has given authority to men in their vocations to carry out justice in his name. Parents have the right to be angry, out of love, for the sake of those God has given them to protect. You should be indignant and protect your children from all who whisper lies in their ears, that the church is irrelevant, that they can do whatever they please with their own body. Likewise, citizens should be angry when the government permits abortion and innocent slaughter, because God has given you the responsibility to vote for the protection of those who cannot defend themselves. And pastors and shepherds should be angry, to strike down the wolf and the bear, to protect the sheep. They must speak against the demons of society that crouch at the door of the church, all who try to silence the word of God, all who spread lies of false worship and sacrifice, any teaching that we can offer anything of our own to please God, apart from the blood of Christ.

But through it all, let your anger and outrage be for the sake of faith, for building up the church rather than tearing down, for defending her from her enemies, and drawing unbelievers out of their ignorance into faith. If the church is under attack for the sake of the gospel, then be outraged. Pray that God would send us faithful champions to drive out our enemies, so there would never be false worship or sacrifice in this place. But if unbelievers are just living in their sin and blindness, then hold your peace and have pity. Pray for words of wisdom and grace, that you may speak to them in love and compassion, that you may never be an obstacle to their salvation, but that God would use you to draw them into the church.

And through it all, look to Jesus, the only true Savior and King. He had every right to be outraged with you, with your unbelief and sin. But instead he chose to save you in his love and pity. He who lashed out in violence to cleanse the temple will himself suffer violence, to bring you peace. He who drove out the moneychangers will be driven out of the city by violent men. Yet by his violent suffering, by his mocking and scourging, by the nails pounded through his hands and feet, by the crown of thorns in his scalp, by the spear in his side and the blood streaming out, he made peace with God for you.

Upon this foundation and cornerstone, upon his crucifixion and resurrection, Christ now builds a new temple: the Church, the new Jerusalem. Here he brings you to repentance, he builds you up on his foundation of faith, so you will never be put to shame. Recognize him today, in his word and sacrament. Do not reject or stumble over him. Recognize his hour of visitation to you here, the incarnate Christ bodily present with his peace, to forgive and strengthen you. May the peace of Jesus be upon you always. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.