

Remembering Jesus  
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 Old Stone Presbyterian Church ~ Lewisburg, West Virginia  
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Psalm 19:1-14

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;  
<sup>4</sup> yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.  
 In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,  
<sup>5</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
 and like a strong man runs its course with joy.  
<sup>6</sup> Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them;  
 and nothing is hidden from its heat.  
<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;  
 the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;  
<sup>8</sup> the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
 the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;  
<sup>9</sup> the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever;  
 the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.  
<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;  
 sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.  
<sup>12</sup> But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.  
<sup>13</sup> Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me.  
 Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.  
<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
 be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

John 2:13-22

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

When Sarah Allan was six we were celebrating fourth of July at my father's house. And, like all good southerners, boiled peanuts were a part of the feast. Someone shelled one for Sarah Allan, and as soon as she ate it, we knew we had a problem. She started complaining about her mouth and throat. Massive hives popped up on her face and neck. We had no idea what was happening, allergies had never been a part of our family or our history. And it was the fourth of July. We gave her popsicles, put her in a cold bath, and very luckily, she didn't get worse but slowly got better.

It was the next week that we found out that she had a severe peanut allergy.

After her diagnosis, we realized something. She'd had peanut butter before. Once. When she was little. We gave her some peanut butter on bread and she hated it. Her face turned red and she SCREAMED when we tried to feed it for her. We didn't try and give it to her anymore. And anytime she was around it she wanted nothing to do with it. We just thought it was the texture.

Her second encounter with peanuts has changed how we remember the first. We now know that she had an allergic reaction to that, too, we just weren't smart enough to recognize it.

Stories are like that, sometimes. It's later events that help you to understand the earlier events.

And how many of our stories can only really be understood when we get far enough away from them to remember of them?

"I once had a farm in Africa." (Out of Africa)

"In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing" (A River Runs Through It)

"People do not give it credence that a fourteen-year-old girl could leave home and go off in the wintertime to avenge her father's blood" (True Grit)

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away" (Star Wars)

Or the gospel told through hymns, music that resides in parts of our brains that almost nothing can reach to wipe away, and so call us back to ourselves even when everything else is dim.

How much more do we only understand in the remembering?

This story in John is told in remembering, it's the first in this gospel to be told this way, and it's not an accident.

Without the rearview mirrors, it appears as though this is a moment of righteous anger for Jesus. He comes in and sees something he doesn't like and throws the bums out.

But it's so much more. As theologian Karoline Lewis writes, "Jesus is not quibbling about maleficence or mismanagement but calls for a complete dismantling of the entire system."

When then disciples look back, they remember what Jesus did in the context of the Psalms. The disciples remember these words from Psalm 69:

<sup>7</sup> For it is for thy sake that I have borne reproach,

<sup>9</sup> For zeal for thy house has consumed me,

and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me.

They have time to consider what we, students of the culture at the time of Jesus also know, it wasn't a surprise that the sellers were there. They needed to be there. It was a part of the whole system. They weren't outlaws or scofflaws. The pilgrims couldn't go to the temple without a sacrifice.

Jesus is talking here about the place of God. The voice of justice. Jesus is here to establish authority and power and voice. This isn't just about the Temple. This is about the world and those who live in it.

It's in the remembering that the disciples put the pieces together to realize that this wasn't just a bad peanut, this was an allergy to the entire system.

It's one of the reasons that John puts this story early in the gospel, rather than closer to the end. It isn't an afterthought, it's a statement of principle, intent, purpose. It's part of Jesus' manifesto.

And it is understood in the remembering.

The people, we, see tables and animals and money and bills.  
Jesus sees empires and systems.

The people, we, see blocks falling and blocks going up.  
Jesus sees life, precious, and love that cannot be conquered.

The people, we, see to-do lists.  
Jesus sees a milky-way.

How do we back up, and live into this bigger picture?

And I can't say what I would have said if this were any other week when this text had appeared in the lectionary, because it didn't, and it isn't, because this feels like a significant week to hear these questions and consider our own place in the bigger picture.

As students cry out for gun reform.

Teachers ask for greater consideration.

And in conversations, it seems like we get tangled in the details of each situation. Can it be 4% and PEIA fix or 5 % and a promise to fix PEIA.

If we ban assault rifles and raise age limits on other guns, will that reduce the number of shooting?

In the context of today's scripture, are we not being called to look at this through the lens of the Jesus who came to disrupt not just the marketplace of the temple, but the whole system.

Not to abandon reality or the needs of the daily, but to consider the kingdom God calls us to be a part of welcoming?

5% may be a goal, but it's just an onramp to that bigger picture, where education is so valued and central that teaching jobs become coveted and prized.

Managing what guns are on the market is a goal, but that is just an onramp to the world where gun violence isn't a part of our reality, nor domestic violence in any kind of relationship.

What does it mean to know that the sin of violence is a part of this world, and how much of a part will we let it have?

Is this a moment when we can speak a greater truth, a truth of justice and love, of caring for one another and God's earth in the way God intends?

Can that be our goal line? Why do we dream small dreams?

I am certain that there were people who told Jesus he shouldn't be bothering with the temple. That there were bigger issues requiring his attention.

I'm sure there were people who told him that he shouldn't disrupt that marketplace, because after all, the marketplace around the corner was much, much worse.

But Jesus had bigger eyes, a bigger heart, and he invites us into them. To see how he sees. To remember what he saw.

The good news is that this is what we do every week. Week after week in our worship, remembering ourselves into the life and community of faith.

Re-remembering what Jesus said at the table, and taking sustenance from the chance to be fed and welcomed by God. Truly bread for our journey.

All of this, not just as a direction, but a key.

When Jesus talks about destroying the temple, D. Mark Davis writes:<sup>1</sup> “The word ‘destroy’ (λύω) has many meanings, the most common of which is ‘to loose.’ It is a liberative word in many ways.” Not only is seeing the bigger picture how we follow Jesus, it is the very key to our liberation.”

Which brings to mind the words of Marianne Williamson, so often quoted, and so relevant, written for us personally and for the church, too.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
 Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
 It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.  
 We ask ourselves,  
 Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?  
 Actually, who are you *not* to be?  
 You are a child of God.  
 Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
 There is nothing enlightened about shrinking  
 so that other people will not feel insecure around you.  
 We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
 We were born to make manifest  
 the glory of God that is within us.  
 It's not in just some of us;  
 It's in everyone.  
 And as we let our own light shine,  
 We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.  
 As we're liberated from our own fear,  
 Our presence automatically liberates others.”<sup>2</sup>

We are writing the story that will one day be remembered.

Will it be the story Jesus started in the temple, 2,000 years ago?

Remember, friends, remember.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://leftbehindandlovingit.blogspot.com/2015/03/liberating-temple.html>

<sup>2</sup> Marianne Williamson. [A Return To Love](#). (1992), Chapter 7