

## ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CHURCH

John 2:13-22 Text vs. 17 *“His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”* (Psalm 69:9)

Our text this morning is a powerful verse out of John’s Gospel that reveals the zeal and the passion of Jesus. It’s easy to see His righteous indignation. It wasn’t mere anger. It was deeper than that. It was more intense. For when Jesus entered the Jerusalem Temple’s Outer Court the scene was chaotic. The area was just over 200 square feet and was surrounded by a covered colonnade of porches with 162 columns. The porches were used for teaching. But now, the porches were filled with merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves. Others were sitting at tables exchanging money. Jesus wasn’t about to tolerate any of that! It was a sacred place. Jerusalem’s Temple was the center for Jewish worship and Jesus’ enthusiasm for His Father’s house burned within Him because the Temple in Jerusalem held great significance for the Jews. It’s where in the Tabernacle, not far away in the Holy of Holies, God’s Divine Presence lived. Jesus knew its importance. And those abusing the Temple got to Him. It had become a marketplace disturbing the worship of God making it hard for worshippers to pray in the turmoil of commerce. Jesus couldn’t turn away as if He hadn’t seen or heard it. His response was not simply being angry. It was love, filled with anger and holy zeal as *“He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle. He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.”* (John 2:15) *“To those who sold doves He said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!”* Then, *His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”*

That phrase is from Psalm 69:9 and means *“consume me”* – it’s *complete surrender*. Jesus was totally consumed by His love for God’s house. Do you have that same feeling? Because reverence for God’s House is important for worship. What does it mean to honor God’s house? When you enter God’s house, this sanctuary, this *safe place*, which is the meaning of sanctuary, you know you are safe in here. You can pray here. It’s dedicated for you to have a closeness with God. How you conduct yourself while here should reflect your reverence. And you should come regularly. You should enjoy being in God’s presence. Remember, when you’re in God’s House, you *are* in His presence. He *is* here! It’s not a sense of duty that brings you here. You don’t have to do it. It’s a place where you can meet with the Lord regularly in a safe place where you are fed spiritually, nurtured in the faith, and forgiven your sins. Being here shows you respect God. That you want to have a relationship with Him.

God’s sanctuary is a holy place. It’s a heavenly place. It’s sanctified. Set apart exclusively for worship and devotion to God. Treat this place with respect. It’s where heaven meets earth, for when you step into a church, you enter where heaven meets earthly existence. The altar, bathed in soft light beckons you. Approach with reverence. Here you meet the Holy One. And when you come here to worship, you join a great cloud of witnesses—angels, saints, the Triune God—all here for your adoration. Within these walls you celebrate the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper where unleavened bread is broken, and fruit of the vine is consumed to help you remember the Body and Blood of Jesus. Baptisms. Weddings. Renewal of wedding vows. Funerals. All unfold here as sacred dramas to join the earthly to the eternal. Here you lift your voice in hymns and psalms echoing your praise to God. The music lifts your praise to the heavenly courts where the *veil between* is almost transparent.

Celtic theology speaks of the *veil between*, as *thin places*. Places where boundaries blur. Where you sense the Divine presence more deeply. *Thin places*. Spiritual doorways that open to bring closeness with God. *Thin places* like ancient hidden wells, hidden, yet waiting to be discovered. Walls can disappear as you encounter the Sacred! Many *thin places* in centuries past were once sites of worship and prayer. Moses encountered God in the burning bush—a *thin place* where ordinary ground became holy ground. Jacob’s dream at Bethel revealed a ladder connecting heaven and earth. (Genesis 28:10–19) When the prophet Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Joshua leading the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. All *thin places*. And Jesus’ anguish and prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before His crucifixion created a *thin place* where the Divine and human met. And you, a modern traveler, can find *thin places*. They don’t have to be physical locations. They can be moments of deep thought. Prayer. And revelation. As a believer you have the privilege to experience *thin places* where heaven touches earth through you.

It doesn’t have to be in a grand cathedral. It could be in a humble place. Like this *Friendly Little Church on the Circle in Everglades City* where memories join with eternity. Remember, *thin places* invite you to linger, to listen, and to glimpse the eternal. The church is that *thin place* where grace flows freely. And when you leave the church, you carry a blessing with you remembering the church is not just a building. It is a holy meeting place where heaven touches the earth. So, tread softly here. You are standing on holy ground. The footprints of those who have gone before you are here today. They walked upon this same ground here on the circle in Everglades City. Their laughter, their tears, their prayers, echo through time. They walked among you. They had homes next to yours. They put their hopes into the very soul of this community. And now, they are gone. But here is where their lives touched yours. They sat in these pews next to you. Sacred

ground is not confined to temples or altars. It is here, in our Memorial Garden. It's when you pause to listen and glimpse the Divine shimmering through these family dedicated stained-glass windows that surround you.

Life is a pilgrimage. Your journey from birth to eternity. It leaves a path across many landscapes. Honor this *church on the circle*. It holds your sorrows and your joys. The earth beneath you is more than soil. It is a threshold to the infinite. Church has many meanings. In the New Testament, the term "church" (ekklesia in Greek) refers to the community of believers in Jesus Christ. An assembly. A congregation. A meeting. Jesus Himself declared, "*I will build My church.*" (Matthew 16:18). And while He is the primary builder, He also uses others for His task. The idea of church was familiar to His listeners. The Old Testament mentions gathering before the Lord. And the term church has a geographical setting. Local churches have specific names. First Baptist Church. Or the name of a city, like Everglades Community Church. A local church is made up of Christian residents of the same city.

However, the Universal Church includes believers in Jesus Christ from all times and all places. It goes beyond geographical boundaries. And the first meeting of the *universal church* will be when the Rapture happens. There has never been a time like it before. And there will never be one like it after. The Rapture holds the hope of believers being caught up to meet Christ before God's wrath is poured out on Earth. Then, before a great white throne of judgment, living unbelievers, and the wicked dead, will be judged. The saved will live forever with Christ in a new heaven and earth. The wicked will be separated from Him forever! So, the church is not merely a physical structure of the here and now. It's a community of faith that worships and serves as a Sacred Community. It's more than bricks and mortar. It's a spiritual family of God that has fellowship, worship, and discipleship.

And just as Jesus purified the Temple, He must purify hearts by removing distractions that get in the way of true worship. Your Passion for God's Kingdom should reach out beyond church walls. Jesus' zeal for His Father's house should challenge you. Will you accept it by sharing the Gospel, serving others, and advancing God's kingdom? Will you burn with the same holy fire? Will you be consumed by love for God and His purposes and let your life and your actions be like His? Remember, you serve a God who is zealous *for you*. So, be zealous for Him! Adopt His fire. In the book of Revelation, Jesus delivered a powerful message to the church in Laodicea. He said, "*Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*" (Revelation 3:16)

That graphic imagery tells of His disappointment with the Laodicean church. The term "lukewarm" means spiritual indifference. Just as lukewarm water is unappealing, their lack of fervor and commitment made Jesus nauseated. He warned that unless they repented and rekindled their passion for Him, they would face rejection, meaning Jesus wants passionate followers who are either "hot" on fire for Him, or "cold" seeking the truth. Examine your own heart. Be enthusiastic in your faith! And may His righteous anger give you wholehearted enthusiasm for His House, so that you can you say, "*Zeal for His house consumes me.*" Live with that passion. Have the commitment Jesus had. And direct your devotion to God above all else. Amen!