

Genuine Faith

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Date: 15 September 2019

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[0:00] John chapter 2, beginning in verse 13 and going to verse 25.

The Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen.

And he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me. So the Jews said to him, What sign do you show us for doing these things? Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

[1:19] The Jews then said, It has taken 46 years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days? But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore 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.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Charles Spurgeon was a great preacher of the 19th century, and he delivered a well-known quote while speaking, while preaching I should say, on Matthew 25, verses 31 through 46.

And in that passage, Jesus is speaking of the coming judgment day when the sheep will be separated from the goats.

And this is what he said in reference to that passage. He said, A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats.

He continued on saying, Dear friend, I invite you to evaluate your life today. Are you a sheep or are you a goat? If you are a leader in a church, are you a shepherd caring for and pastoring your sheep well?

[2:50] Or are you a clown, distracting and amusing and even shearing your goats? Your answer to these questions will determine your destiny.

Charles Spurgeon died in 1892, but those words that he spoke over 100 years ago have proved to be prophetic. On August 25th of this year, very recently, NBC News ran an article on their website, and the headline read, With attendance plummeting, church turns to a new solution.

Carnival rides. Not making it up. A church in Norwich, in the United Kingdom, Spurgeon's homeland, erected a giant slide in the midst of their worship space.

And it's quite a sight. There in the midst of this ancient cathedral with these beautiful stained glass windows is this giant slide covered in red and white stripes and carnival lights.

And as carnival music echoed throughout the sanctuary of that ancient cathedral, the first rider descended around and around the twirling slide. The rider was the dean of the cathedral, the Reverend Jane Hedges.

[4:17] In total, she slid down the slide four times within a 15-minute time span, all while wearing her traditional vestments. And the article she has quoted saying, Our hope is that it will bring a very different audience into the cathedral, to which I immediately thought, be careful what you wish for.

Now, our church just hosted a back-to-school-themed carnival.

And lots of people came. And it was a great day. So you hear me say that, and you could be thinking, So what's the difference? They had a carnival.

We had a carnival. Well, I think the difference lies in this. One was primarily concerned with attracting a crowd, while the other was primarily concerned with meeting a need, which was sharing the gospel and getting new shoes on kids whose families couldn't afford to provide that for them.

Here's really, I think, where the difference lies, though. On that day, we probably had, we estimate, around 1,000 people come on a Saturday afternoon. And as you can tell, we don't nearly have that many show up on a Sunday morning for worship.

[5:50] So the difference is in the line of thinking. If we thought, hey, we could potentially get a whole lot more people here on a Sunday morning if we had adapted some of the aspects of the carnival that we had into our worship service, right?

We get a free shaved ice on your way into the sanctuary. Captain Armando could be strolling through the pews making balloon animals for people and for their children during the sermon. Maybe we could take out a section of the pews over here that nobody goes over to sit in and we could erect a bouncy house of some sort, right? Kids would love to come to church if that was the case.

People would come. They'd be entertained. But let me tell you, that's not the purpose of the church. Now again, I know that last week's message was about joy.

And we saw that joy is a characteristic that should characterize all believers. But the joy that we have as we gather together on Sunday morning is the joy that we have in Christ.

[7:03] Not in filling our bellies with cotton candy. It's the joy that comes from knowing Him personally as our Lord and as our Savior. The joy of knowing that our sins have been forgiven.

It's the joy in experiencing the transformed power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and in the lives of our church family. It's the joy that we express in our time of worship through singing and through praying and through reading and through hearing the Word of God preached.

It's the joy we receive from our Great Shepherd who nourishes not just our body but our minds and our souls with His Word. What Spurgeon said then has now become our reality.

But let me tell you that that thought was not original with Him. Go back to Scripture. And Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, verses 1-4.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by His appearing in His kingdom. Preach the Word. Be ready in season and in out of season.

[8:12] Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

So you see, this has always been a problem for the church. Pastors acting like clowns to get people into the building, people coming and being fed a diet of cotton candy sermons.

They're light, they're fluffy, they're tasty, but they're incapable of bringing them the nourishment that they truly need and instead leaves them eventually with a sticky mess on their hands and rotting teeth.

Pastors have taken on the persona of a CEO in their churches and they've treated their churches like retail stores. What matters most to pastors in these contexts is the number of people that are coming and the fact that the numbers are increasing.

What matters most to attenders is that their felt needs are being met and if not, they'll take their business somewhere else.

[9:37] And that's these pastors like many business owners worst fear. We've got to keep our customers satisfied. Many professing Christians and nominal believers in the church follow their own desires and flock to preachers who offer them God's blessing apart from Jesus' instruction.

Instruction that includes a calling to bear the cross and to follow Him. They offer salvation apart from repentance. They fill the worship service with things that will bring people pleasant sensations, good feelings, especially good feelings about themselves.

They make the people listening the hero of the sermon instead of Jesus Christ. They say things like you can do it, you can overcome if you follow these steps. You can have a better marriage if you follow these steps.

And in that place, you take the place of Jesus Christ. And religion takes the place of the gospel. You can tell when a church isn't Christ-centered and when it isn't gospel-driven because the message of the worship service emphasizes more on what you need to do instead of what Christ has already done.

And so they give you a series of do these steps and life will be better. These are the things that you must do instead of saying, hey, look, Christ has already done it.

[11:07] It's a religion. What they're doing is religion. Religion says, you must do. The gospel says, Christ has already done.

And so what do you think Jesus would do today if he entered into such an environment? How do you think that he would respond?

Well, I think in this passage that we've read in John chapter 2 we have a pretty good idea of what he might do. Jesus encountered such a spirit of disingenuous faith when he went from Cana up to Jerusalem and entered the temple during Passover.

And so here's the main idea for this morning's sermon. In John chapter 2 verses 13 through 25, Jesus encounters disingenuous faith and in so doing provides us with three examples of what genuine faith looks like.

Now, you might be thinking, well, you just said it's not step by step and these are three things. That sounds like three steps to me. You are doing what you just criticized, but let me tell you that this is not a step by step do it yourself sermon.

[12:26] doing these things will not make your faith genuine. Let me tell you, the Lord sees straight through to the heart, to the mind.

And so this sermon is really serving as an examination. The examination asks one question. Is the faith that you have genuine faith?

Is it true saving faith? Or is it disingenuous and false? And so today, we are going to do what the Apostle Paul advised the Christians in Philippi to do in chapter 2, verse 12.

To work out your salvation with fear and with trembling. And so my purpose in this sermon is to either confirm to you that your faith is genuine or reveal to you if it isn't.

If it is, then I hope that you will hear this message and you will seek to be used by God to bring reform to His church. If it isn't, then I pray that the Holy Spirit will transform you, giving you eyes to see that your faith is baseless and turn you to genuine faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

[13:43] So the first example Jesus shows us about genuine faith is that genuine faith is zealous for God's glory. In verses 13 and 17, Jesus enters the temple.

He's really upset by what He sees. He takes action. And we learn from the disciples that the motivation behind that action was that He was zealous for God's house.

He was zealous for God's glory. And He was upset when He saw that that wasn't taking place in the place where it was supposed to be taking place.

Many Jews came from all over the region to celebrate the Passover at this time. And so they were required to make sacrifices. And so for those who were traveling from long distances, that meant that they would have to travel with their sacrifice.

They would have to travel with their cow or with their goat or their sheep or whatever. And so that could be a tedious task for them to do.

[14:49] So, Jesus goes into the temple, right? And He sees that they are celebrating the Passover, but He is not at all impressed with how many worshipers are there.

Notice that's not His first impression. He doesn't go in and be like, wow, look at how many people came to church today. We must be doing something right. That wasn't His first impression. His first impression was that He was astonished not with the large number of people, but with the lack of concern that there was for the worship and giving glory to God.

And so the critical words for us to understand in these first few verses are these. In the temple. In the temple. The outer court of the temple was reserved for the Gentiles.

That was their space to gather and to worship, but instead it was overrun with animals and commerce. If these activities had taken place outside of the temple, there's every reason to believe that Jesus would have said nothing.

He would have done nothing about that because that would have been an appropriate location. But it was where these things were taking place that incensed Him. So, again, these people were bringing or selling, I should say, the livestock and they were exchanging money in the temple.

[16:16] And so the question that we ask is, well, what motivated them to do that? Why would they think that doing this would be an okay thing to do? Well, again, at the Passover, the Jews were required to sacrifice an animal.

For those coming from long distances, that was an inconvenience. It was much easier for them to come, to bring their family, to go to the temple, and to buy the sacrifices there when they arrive.

Also, the money changers were there because the temple had a tax that they required the people to pay. And they were very specific about the coins that they would accept.

It had to be the purest kind of silver. And so, you would bring your money and they would exchange it for the coinage that they deemed to be suitable. Now, they also made a profit off of this.

Some people, some commentators speculate that they made as much as 12% off of these exchanges. So, there was a lot of money to be made for them. Prior to this time, prior to this time, the animals and the money changers were given a location for these activities across the Kindred Valley up on the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

[17:31] A location significantly removed from the location of the temple. But by Jesus' time, for the sake of convenience, the outer court of the temple was transformed from a place of worship and prayer to a place of commerce.

And it was an inappropriate location for these activities to take place. And Jesus was incensed. And He took action. He fashioned a whip.

Not to hit people with, but, you know, if you've ever worked with livestock, they can be hard to motivate. So that was His tool of motivation to get them out of that place. Once He did that, He kicked over the tables of the money changers, scattering their coins all over the place and creating a chaotic atmosphere.

All eyes would have been turned to Him. In verse 17, John tells us why Jesus did what He did. His disciples remembered that zeal for your house, God's house, would consume Him.

That passage is taken from a psalm of David. Psalm 69. In that passage, David is distressed. He's distressed by what he sees.

[18:50] He's distressed by the persecution he's receiving for the zeal, for the concern that he has for the Lord, for worship of Him and giving glory to Him.

and he's faced with opposition for doing just that thing. You, in a similar way, may encounter that sometime if ever you post anything on social media where you take a biblical stance on an issue that is not popular in our world today.

Have you ever seen that? The comments that people will make, the people who you thought were your friends all of a sudden reveal that, no, they don't really care so much for what you believe.

In fact, they hate what you believe. And that can be distressing. Seeing Jesus cleanse the temple, His disciples connected His zeal to that of David's.

But it wasn't zeal for the temple building itself that motivated Jesus. It was zeal for the activity of the temple that was designed to give worship and glory to God.

[20:10] So, just try to imagine it. Just try to imagine you coming to church today and walking through those doors and there's a cow up here on the stage just milling around, right?

And sheep just scattered all throughout the pews and people haggling over prices, money prices and exchanging money in the corners. And you're immediately filled with the smells, right, of being around barnyard animals and you hear the disputes taking place in a sanctuary, a place that was meant for prayer and for worship.

How would that make you feel? I hope it would upset you because that is such a distraction, is it not? How can we focus on Christ and worshipping Him when there is all this other activity taking place?

So, I hope that you see in a small way just how upset Jesus was. Instead of the low hum of prayers being made to God in a solemn environment, Jesus' ears are immediately filled with the bellowing of cows and the bleating of sheep.

Instead of encountering brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is quibbling over money and He couldn't stand it.

[21:38] Yes, this setup made things convenient for people. I'm sure the temple authorities thought that they were being relevant to their culture and their times and to those who were seekers, being seekers sensitive, but these procedures impacted the people's ability to do something so much more important, to worship God and to give Him glory.

The truth that we need to grasp here is that this thing has almost completely vanished from the landscape of contemporary Christianity today. It's the truth that God is particular about how He is approached in the sanctuary.

God cares what we do in this building, in this place. It matters. If genuine faith is zealous for God's glory, then disingenuous faith is zealous for something else.

And usually that something else is your self. pastors want notoriety, so they focus on filling the pews with methods and sermons that will please people, using God to bring glory to themselves. Church attenders desire to be the focus and want to belong to the place where they feel like things are happening, and so they have church pride, proud to be a part of that church, that big church, that trendy church, that relevant church.

[23 : 10] church, you know, I don't like it when we have to cancel church on a Sunday morning, but there are some times due to weather where that's the prudent decision.

But one thing I enjoy doing on those Sunday mornings whenever unfortunately we have to cancel churches is watch TV and see the news scrolling across the bottom of the churches that have also canceled and the names that some of these churches call themselves.

That's what amuses me, right? Because I see in even that name they take so much time and effort to say something that sounds trendy, to say something that sounds relevant, because even in that name they're trying to attract people I believe for the wrong reasons.

Jesus came in and he saw these things that were taking place and they were taking away from something that was so much more important and it ate him up inside. It consumed him, it ate him up inside.

He had to do something about it. He sought to reform the worship that was taking place in the temple because anything that takes away from the worship of God must be discarded.

[24 : 28] Now there are limits that we have in doing this. The Bible also describes Barabbas as being a zealot. But his zeal was in something else.

His zeal was politically motivated and it was truly fueled by hatred. That can't be the case for us. Jesus didn't hurt anyone to make his point.

Neither should we. Our attitude shouldn't be we're better than you but it should be let us show you a better way. I believe that the church is in need of reform today and I believe that that reform begins with each one of us.

We must begin by inviting Jesus into our temple, our body, our mind, our soul and plead with him through prayer to drive out whatever is in us that must be taken away.

That is keeping us from seeking his kingdom and his righteousness. That is the place to start. You with God asking him to cleanse your temple.

[25 : 34] 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 19 through 20. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God? You are not your own for you were bought with a price.

So glorify God in your body. So we must be zealous about pursuing Christ's likeness and asking the Spirit to drive out whatever is in us that is taking us away from worshiping God and bringing him the glory in all that we do.

Genuine faith is zealous for the glory of God. And the second example that Jesus provides for us about what genuine faith looks like is this. Genuine faith is not dependent upon signs.

It's not dependent upon signs. Verses 18 through 22. Read those again. So the Jews said to him, what sign do you do to show us for doing these things?

Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, it has taken us 46 years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days. But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

[26 : 45] When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus show me a miracle and I will believe.

Last Sunday night we were watching our Marks of a healthy church series and Mark Dever was preaching and he talked about a moment where he was invited to come to a group where a lot of young people were meeting and he was going to speak but beforehand he observed that they were on their hands and knees praying that God would speak if you want to hear from God read his word and if you want to hear it audibly read it out loud the Jews were upset with Jesus actions and so they asked him to show his credentials prove to us that you have the authority to do this so really what they're doing here is they're questioning!

His authority and I think that asking God for signs is really just a God cannot be ordered to do things on command listen Jesus could have done that he could have performed many signs right there in front of their eyes in fact he did not in that moment but in many other moments they witnessed they saw with their own eyes him healing the blind they saw him do miracle after miracle after miracle

sign after sign after sign and guess what they still didn't believe God doesn't perform stunts to gain or maintain our allegiance in fact he shouldn't have to if our faith is genuine then he doesn't have to do that in John chapter 6 Jesus feeds the multitudes!

Remember there were baskets overflowing with bread and with fish those people still weren't satisfied with that meal that he gave to them they still weren't convinced that he was the Christ in verse 30 they asked him right after he had done that they said then what sign do you do that we may believe you what work do you perform they said our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness as it is written he gave them bread to eat they had had received a sign they had been fed but they wanted more you fed us this is what they're saying in effect you fed us for a day but Moses fed the people for 40 years top that and we'll believe you and even if he had I'm convinced that they still wouldn't have believed they even had the audacity to twist scripture in attempting to back him into a corner thinking that they could make demands of him this in genuine faith demands signs and then more signs and then greater signs but they are requests

I believe motivated not by those who want their hearts filled but their bellies Jesus proceeds to preach the gospel to this crowd but by the end in John chapter 6 they've had enough he's not going to give them what they want they want signs not truth so they left let's pick it up there in John 6 66 through 69 after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him so Jesus said to the twelve do you want to go away as well Simon Peter answered him Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God God the temple temple that was standing in Jesus time was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD but Jesus wasn't speaking of that temple he was speaking about himself [31:05] Christ is the true temple he is the living presence of God in the midst of God's people and the rebuilding of that temple took place at his resurrection when the apostle Paul met with the philosophers and the great thinkers of Athens on Mars Hill this is what he had to say to them in Acts chapter 17 the times of ignorance God overlooked but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and on this he has given assurance what I get out of that God says through Paul that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the supreme sign and that he will do it only once he has done it only once he will not send

Jesus week by week to die and be raised from the cross by raising Christ from the dead he established his church once Christ is the temple and all men are commanded to come to him in order to worship him and to serve him the one true living and only God genuine faith is zealous for the glory of God and it does not depend upon signs then thirdly genuine faith isn't contingent upon experience again verses 23 through 25 now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing but Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in a man faith that is contingent on experience is different from faith that is based on signs but they are related signs are outward demonstrations but experiences are inward internal emotional often times churches like ours and those who would hear a sermon like this would label us or they would label me as being non charismatic and accusing someone like me or someone like us of being opposed to experience and opposed to emotion and opposed to feeling it's all head there but no heart but let me tell you that is not the case at all and please hear that that is not the case at all

God has given us emotions and I believe that he works through them Jesus was emotional this day when he went to the temple was he not we believe that God exposes himself in our experiences but we do not discern truth based solely or primarily on our emotions and on our experiences as those with genuine faith we have experienced remorse over sin we have experienced the joy of answered prayer we do not advocate for some kind of a cold religion that is devoid of any kind of emotion or experience however sometimes we think differently and we feel differently from what God's word says and in that moment we are tempted to allow our experiences or our emotions to dictate to us what is truth even though it contradicts what

God's word says please understand and I testify I have thought wrongly before I have felt wrongly before I have experienced things that I got completely wrong God's word is never wrong and if it's our experience or our emotion that butts up against it am I feeling right or is God's word true guess what God's word is always true and if I'm feeling a certain way or experiencing a certain thing and it contradicts what God's word says then I'm wrong God's word is right God's word is always true and

so our teachings aren't built on how we feel or what we think but what God has said authentic emotion and experience then is drawn in response to the truth of God's word as we hear it I don't know if you've been paying attention to some things that have been going on in the evangelical Christian world these days but one of the recent phenomena that has been taking place are these deconversion experiences people who have pastored churches who have led worship who have written Christian books have come out and posted on social media I'm not I'm not a Christian anymore or I'm doubting what I believe now and I don't even care anymore one such person was Joshua Harris who wrote a best selling Christian book I Kissed Dating Goodbye I remember in college how many students were reading that book and then the recent news came out shockingly that he he's getting a divorce from his wife then after that he's leaving his position within his church then after that saying that he's not even sure at all anymore what it is that he does believe a short time later after that a former

[37 : 32] Hillsong singer and songwriter Marty Sampson published a social media post in which he said time for real talk I'm genuinely losing my faith and it doesn't bother me anymore that's heartbreaking that should bother you a lot it should bother us first John chapter 2 verses 19 through 20 why is this the case then why are we hearing these deconversion stories I believe it's because of this they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that it might be plain that they are all not of us but you have been anointed by the holy one and you have all knowledge let me tell you that

I speak from experience and I'm sure that you can as well that I've been in those valleys before where life has not been enjoyable where tomorrow was not something to look forward to where there's been struggles there's been doubts there's been questions that needed answering but I testify that it was Christ who kept me during those times as we've sung this morning he will hold me fast that's not just something that I believe that the Bible teaches but it's something that I know that I've experienced I believe in the eternal security of the believer primarily because the Bible teaches it but again also because I've experienced it in fact I feel like I experience it every single day my favorite hymn just so happens is one that we sung this morning come thou fount of every blessing and my favorite verse is this one oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to to be let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee prone to wonder Lord I feel it prone to leave the God I love take my heart Lord take and seal it seal it in thy courts above whenever I go out and I see those those kids that are a little bit more difficult to handle and so they're they're harnessed in some way to their parent you know what I'm saying I look at that child and I think oh that's me that's me and that parent is the Lord because that's me every day every day wanting to go out wanting to be prone to leave the God I love and think the Lord that he is the one on the other hand of that string amen says no no

I won't let you go you can't break free from me oh man I take so much joy in that wonderful truth and so I read verses like Romans 8 28 through 30 this is one of my favorite passages of scripture for this wonderful promise that as much as I am likely to mess things up completely God won't let me and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good even those valley moments even those times of difficulty that we don't think are good God is using them for a greater good for those who are called according to his purpose for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the first predestined he also called and those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified and

I thank God because if you're in that category look everyone in this category goes into the next and into the next and into the next and into that final category when we will be glorified when we will be with the Lord forever!

[42 : 05] There is so much peace in that wonderful promise that God will in fact hold me fast that my faith is genuine not because of me not because of what I must do but because of Jesus Christ because of what he has done because of the truth that he has revealed to me saving me calling me bringing me to himself never to let me go and so in this whole story this whole narrative that we've just gone over this is really to me a picture of salvation the first scene the cleansing of the temple graphically depicts what God does in his hatred of sin and of impurity coming then into our temple on the second scene where he cleanses it where he gets rid of all of that junk and then speaks of this resurrection that is in Jesus Christ right this transformation that we then experience the old made new and then the final scene of the shallow belief of the people that reveals

God's provision for salvation and that it only comes through what he's done giving us genuine faith and so I ask you as we conclude this morning is your faith genuine do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior is it based on signs and experiences alone is that what you're seeking from him and ignoring his word if that's the case I encourage you to come forward and pray and hey listen what a great time after hearing this message about the need to have our temple cleansed if there is something that is in your life that you're struggling with that I encourage you to come forward to the altar and ask God to clean that out to remove that in repentance to seek his help and I promise you that he will