

**JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND I
WILL RAISE IT AGAIN IN THREE DAYS."
JOHN 2:19**



2021

LENT

JOURNEY

Sunday March 7th

Prelude

Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship: (based on Psalm 122:1)

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”

As we gather for worship today, no matter where we are, may we know that, in Christ, we are together as the Body of Christ in the world. Let us worship our God!

Hymn: “Sanctuary” (sing twice) (FWS #2164)

Reading the Word: John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple He found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 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. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 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.

Ministry of Music

Message: “God’s House”

What is “God’s house?” In the narrowest of definitions, and the most common in many people’s minds, it is the church building. We have thousands of church buildings around the world, and we consider them the place where we meet to worship, have fellowship, learn, pray, grow in faith, and then leave to “go into the world.” For many of us, it is representative of God’s presence in our lives and with our congregations.

However, for the nation of Israel, it holds a far deeper meaning. From the time of the Exodus, the Hebrew tribes believed that God’s very presence was in the Ark of the Covenant. When the temple was built, that ark was in the Holy of Holies where only an honored few priests were allowed to enter because it meant they were with God.

So maybe it is a little easier to understand how Jesus could become so upset with the money changers and merchants who spread their wares all over the temple courtyard, not only to sell them or exchange Roman money into temple coins, but also to make huge profits by overcharging the people for their merchandise or services.

By turning the temple courtyard into a business that also defrauded people, the merchants and moneychangers were desecrating the House of God. In addition, the Roman government as well as the priests at the temple were getting their share of the proceeds. This is not how the House of God was supposed to be, and Jesus, filled with anger, drove them out, making a scene and wielding a whip to get his point across.

I can understand his frustration. I remember how disappointed I was when I traveled to the Holy Land and saw churches built on many of the traditional sites where Jesus had been. Even the Via Dolorosa, the possible site where Jesus had carried the cross to Golgotha was filled with merchants who tried to sell souvenirs and their memorabilia to us as we took the path. Somehow, never felt inspired or uplifted by the experience - until I arrived home.

In processing the experience, I realized the important part was that I truly had walked where Jesus walked, and it brought the scriptures to life for me. I had been to many of the places we read about in the Bible, and I knew what it was like to be in the wilderness, to walk cobbled streets, to stand in the Garden of Gethsemane, and to place a prayer in a tiny crevice in what was left of the wall of the Temple. It wasn't about the buildings or the merchants, but about Jesus who had walked those streets and lived in that place.

For Jesus, much of what he did was to break out of molds, to smash ideas about priorities and how God interacts with humanity. The symbolism of his words in telling the temple leaders, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" confused and confounded them. They didn't understand that it wasn't the building, but Jesus himself. Jesus brought the very presence of God to earth to live with the people.

We find God's house wherever we find the presence of God. Our world is God's house. Jesus was offering something much better than a building; he was offering himself for us, and he died on the cross and was raised from the dead to free us from sin and from trying to keep God confined to a house. Jesus saw beyond houses, beyond buildings, beyond misguided teachings, beyond traditions that kept the people from growing in faith, from becoming free to be who God intended for them to be.

Do our churches do the same? We are in an extraordinary time when we need to break out of the old way of doing things and find new ways to bring Christ to the world. The pandemic has taught us a lot. We need to move into the digital age where we can reach more people. What would we need to do in order to see how we are as the church in the world from Jesus' perspective? How can we look with new or fresh eyes at our churches to cleanse the things that need to be thrown out and to find ways to offer others a chance to fully experience God's love, grace and presence? How can we see with the eyes of Jesus?

God's house may be a building, and here at First UMC, we have a beautiful building, and we have many ministries that we participate in to make a difference. And, still, Jesus calls us to review and renew with "fresh eyes" so we can expand God's "house" into the world even farther. How will that look? Whom will we reach?

When we break forward into new ways of thinking and growing, we will know that God's House is for all people in all places, and that will reflect the ways we worship and fellowship and are in ministry in the world. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, once said, "The world is my parish," and so it is for all churches. We begin where we are; we minister to those around us. We also have more opportunities through the Internet to reach out to the world.

We do this in partnership and cooperation as members of God's family and as the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world. It takes a world-wide community to share the love of God with others.

May we be open to what God has in store for us! Amen.

Prayer:

Forgiving God, there are times when we forget that we are your Church in the world, and we act in ways that are contrary to your teachings through Jesus. Help us to remember that, no matter where we are, at work, at home, at school, in the marketplace, or any situation, you have commissioned us to honor and respect others and share your compassion, kindness, and love with them. Forgive us for those times when we fail to be your church. Thank you for your grace that helps us to continue to grow in grace even when we have fallen short of your vision for us. We receive your forgiveness with humble hearts. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Holy Communion

Hymn: "For the Bread Which You Have Broken," vv. 1,4 (UMH #614)

Blessing

PRAYER WARRIORS NEEDED

Jen Patria
Bill Stover
Naomi
Erin Frane
Jim Slater
Charles Gilman
Barbara Clement

Harry Junkins
Fred Walton
Sophia
Barbara Glidden
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook

Juliann

The family of Jeanne Westcott
The family of Bill and Gayle Gardei
Jen - Stebbins daughter-in-law
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Front line workers
Our Denomination
Our Country
Our Church family
Those who have lost loved ones to COVID



WHO WE ARE

FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



One way to make a donation to FUMC is to point your phone camera on QR code and it will guide you through the process... thanks for making a difference.



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038
Email - office@fumcportsmouth.net
Website - fumcportsmouth.com

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson
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