

Read: John 2:13-22

A Play on Words

John 2:13-16, 18-19

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So 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. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!”

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“If you need help building an ark, I Noah guy!”

“Did you know that airplanes were in the Bible? Yeah, Pontius was a Pilate!”

Okay, okay, one more...

“Did you know that baseball is in the Bible? It’s right there in Genesis 1 – in the big-inning!”

Each of these statements is a “play on words.” The entire statement, taken together, makes us think about the words in a new way. Whether it’s Noah, or Pontius Pilate, or “In the beginning God created...,” a play on words makes us think about things in a new way. Jesus does the same thing in today’s reading. He makes us think about things in a new way.

The Jewish leaders didn’t want to believe that Jesus is God. When Jesus started flipping tables and driving out the animals, they asked: What sign will you give us to prove that you can do this? They didn’t believe that Jesus was God, so they demanded proof. *Show us, right now! What gives you the right to do this? Show us! Prove it!*

And instead of giving proof, Jesus answers with a prophecy—a play on words: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.” The Jewish leaders didn’t want to believe that Jesus is God, so they scoffed: “No one can do that!”

Except... Jesus did. His body was destroyed, and he died on Good Friday. On the third day, Jesus raised himself from the dead. He proved that he had the authority to cleanse the temple, because he had even greater authority: The power to lay down his life and take it up again.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What was in the temple area that made Jesus mad?
- What did Jesus say when he flipped the tables?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did Jesus respond with anger toward the money changers and Jewish leaders?
- What was the “play on words” prophecy that Jesus gave?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What was the sign that Jesus gave, and how did this “sign” answer their question?
- What does this account tell us about the purpose and focus of worship?

Closing Prayer:

Christ, the life of all the living, Christ, the death of death, our foe,
who, thyself for me once giving to the darkest depths of woe:
through thy sufferings, death, and merit I eternal life inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, dearest Jesus, unto thee. Amen.
(*Christian Worship* 396:1)