

The Third Sunday in Lent
March 4, 2018

Text: John 2:13-25
Theme: "That's Crazy"

If you are going to build something a plan helps. I have part of the plans for the construction of our education wing or middle school. I have two of three sheets from Hannah's Drafting Service. I have the floor plan sheet and the elevation sheet dated 2/24/84 and 3/11/84 respectively. It was all pretty well built according to plan. There were a few changes. The windows on the walk inside of the basement become sliding doors. There is a support post left out. It would have been in the middle of the kitchen so someone decided that particular post was superfluous. There is a wall detail on the third sheet that I don't have here. It doesn't show any waterproofing material on the exterior basement wall. Such water proofing, I think, would have been money well spent.

It does take time and money to build. I don't know how much time or how much money it took to build. Maybe some of you know. But if I said to you that I could build that building for \$1000 in three weeks and I could do it by myself I think you would look at me funny as though I were a bit funny. That would be a reasonable reaction for such a crazy statement.

Jesus speaks words today that must have been considered pretty crazy in our text for today. Those who had their own ideas about temples and righteousness before God were puzzled and reacted at Jesus' words,

His words that came as an answer to their words which were a reaction to Jesus shocking action. But really, who's crazy here?

Jesus action at the temple could not be escape notice. Remember a couple of weeks ago when a woman drove her car into one of the barricades protecting the White House? This produced an immediate response by the Secret Service. Jesus' action is something like that, shocking and unheard of. He clears out the temple in no subtle way. There were merchants who had set up shop in the temple area. Some were selling animals—oxen, sheep, and pigeon—others were exchanged coins. These were animals to be used for sacrifice and a coin exchange (for a price) for the required coinage for the temple tax.

Jesus cleans it all out. He whips out us whip made of cords and drives out the sellers and the exchangers along with the oxen and the sheep. He overturned the tables of the money exchangers and poured out their coins. He told the pigeon sellers to lose the pigeons from the temple. The birds would have been in cages and not been part of the stampede. Jesus speaks indicting words, "Do not make my Father's house a house of trade." (vs 16, or a market).

All of this produces a pretty obvious question from the Jews (often in John the "Jews" are associated with the Jewish leadership). "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" (vs 18) 'Just who do you think you are coming in here and doing this crazy stuff? Have you forgotten who is in charge here? Why should we not have you arrested right now?' Jesus gives a crazy response. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it

up.” (vs 19) ‘What? It has taken 46 years to build this magnificent structure and you will do it in three days?’ Herod had started work on this temple in 20 BC so now we are at 26 AD. Actually work on the whole temple complex would still be going on until 64 AD. They didn’t voice it here, but some may have been thinking what is voiced later in John, “Are we not right in saying you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (John 8:48)

Crazy—do we know about crazy? Maybe our lives are pretty crazy. We start out with good plans, but the as built sheet turns out to be quite different. It seems like there may be a few support posts missing and the door we thought we would be walking through is no where to be found. Just how is this thing going to turn out? Then there is the crazy of the world around us. There is a great stampede after goods and a trampling on life be that mass shootings, the destruction of the unborn or the closeting of the aged and infirm. Has the world indeed gone crazy? The immoral has become moral and the moral declared immoral. Now Harry doesn’t meet Sally, Harry wants to be Sally (taken from title of new book by Ryan Anderson, “When Harry Became Sally”). The divine order is ignored. We decry the secularization of society, but the real craziness is the secularization of the church as we may do more reflecting of the world in the church than being a reflection of our Lord to the world.

Maybe God was crazy for choosing us. Maybe the whole idea of Israel as His chosen was a bit crazy too. Israel probably thought Moses was pretty crazy when he showed up with the news that God had sent him to bring them out from their Egyptian slavery. It was pretty unbelievable

but it happened. God brought them out with a crazy display of power. Then He gave an encore at the Red Sea. Today in our OT lesson they are hearing God speak to them the words of the Ten Commandments. Before our text in chapter 19 this moment is set up by some awe-inspiring, knee knocking frightening events. There was lightning and a thick cloud, God comes down in fire on the mountain and smoke goes up as from a kiln, the mountain quakes and then it is the most frightening of all. God begins to speak to them. He is showing them, laying out the plan before them, as to how they will live as His holy people, His chosen from among all the nations.

You would think all this would make a lasting impression on the people. It certainly made a short term one. It was so fearful, too fearful. “Moses, you speak to us...but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” (Exodus 20:19) Yes, there was short terms trembling, but more long term forgetting, actually not so long term, after only 40 days. was God a bit crazy for even trying?

But obviously He kept after it, kept working the plan. So Jesus arrives. His apostles were maybe tempted to think at times that Jesus did not have great people skills. His action here was greatly offending the leaders. How many of the Twelve were with Him at this time, I don't know if we can determine, but we do know there were some from the statement, “His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” (John 2:17) They had to know this action would really tick off the leadership. Later on they would point out to Jesus that

His words were offending the Pharisees (Matthew 15:12). His teaching with authority ruffled the feathers of the authorities. Maybe they thought He should hold back on some of the crazy talk.

Jesus speaks hard words here and would continue to speak hard words, certainly ones the disciples would rather not hear, words about going up to Jerusalem, being handed over, suffering, dying, and raising again. He would talk of denying self and taking up the cross and following Him. He said shocking words about not having any life in you if you did not eat His body and drink His blood.

He goes forward and it happens as He has said. The disciples follow, not always happily, surely not understanding fully. And then when it all comes about He gives them the crazy instructions to make disciples of all nations, to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all beginning in Jerusalem. They are supposed to do this, twelve men of humble background, no, actually only eleven at this point—disciples of all nations?

But similar or even the same words come to our ears. He lays out the plan, doesn't keep it hidden. Yes, we too are to deny self and follow after Him. We do so loving God with all we are and loving our neighbor as self. This is quite counter to the old nature drive to deny neighbor and love selfishness. The plan is to be faithful unto death as we are salt and light new creations declaring the praises of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Do God's plans seem a bit crazy or at least far fetched? Well, remember God's crazy capabilities. From a pile of dirt He made a man,

and from one small piece of that man he made a whole, wonderful woman. Really, more amazing than that, He made all there is from nothing. We see such crazy capabilities in Jesus. From bottled water (actually, jarred water, big jars) He made the best wine ever. He had this wonderful dinner recipe of taking only five loaves and two fish and feeding over 5000 people with more food left over. We are speaking of the Almighty. Three days for the temple would be no big deal, after all, it was the heavens and the earth in six.

If it were only God's power before us alone, this would not be such good news. What if He used it against us? But in His plans He tells us more. He puts before us His crazy love. This would mean a crazy change for Him. John tells us Jesus did not need anyone to tell Him what was in the heart of man. Of course He knew all as God, knew every inclination of man's heart was continual evil from youth. Now He would know the heart of man in whole new way by becoming man. He had a heart that felt and longed and loved, and was tempted, yet without sin.

It is this One who comes to His temple (just as Malachi said would happen, Malachi 3:1). Zeal for His Father's House would consume Him (Psalm 69:9—the past tense of the Psalm is changed to future here). It was zeal of the Father's plan, His food to do the will of His Father (John 4:34). The temple would be destroyed and Jesus would raise it in three days. As John tells us He was speaking of the temple of His body (vs 21). In this One dwells all the fullness of the Deity in bodily form. He bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness

(1 Peter 2:24). This Temple is destroyed, that is, He gives His life. He raises it up again on the third day. He tells us that He has the authority to lay His life down and to take it up again (John 10:18). He lives the perfectly holy life, gives Himself as the perfectly complete sacrifice for sin, and shows the perfect victory over death by rising again on the third day. It's all according to plan.

In Him we have been changed, brother and sister in Christ. We have gone from those dead and doomed to those made alive and heirs of eternity. We have been buried and raised with Him in baptism. Our bodies are now temples of the Holy Spirit. We are living stones built upon the Cornerstone to be a spiritual house, to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:4,5). God strengthens us in our faith. He does remarkable work with simple things, with water and bread and wine. He strengthens us to be faithful, even faithful unto death, and then a crown of life.

It doesn't always turn out according to our plans, but we remember we are part of God's plan. We are His workmanship, royal priests to serve Him. We are His lights in the darkness all around. 'Let me help you. The light of Jesus is bright enough for both of us.' We love with a love that does not harm neighbor in his body or life, nor in sexual purity, nor his stuff, nor by attacking his good name, nor in envy of his blessings. Instead this love is one that works for his good, even if he has no good in mind for me.

Crazy isn't it? Crazy that God would call the likes of you and me to be His servants, to serve those around us through us, to declare His praises? But He has? Praise be to His holy Name! For Jesus' sake. Amen