

## A CHURCH BUILDING IS NOT OUR SANCTUARY, CHRIST IS

What is Jesus saying in the cleansing of the temple. There is a message here in what he is doing that we need to hear.

He is turning people's attention from the building to himself. It doesn't mean the building, including our church building is not important to us. Of course it is very important. It hopefully again will soon be a place where we can gather together for worship.

Our faith lives are built on a community. Our Wednesday night services are meant to point that out. That community is very important to our faith. It always has been.

Whatever church community you have been a part of is important.

I will never forget worshiping in the chapel at Luther Seminary where we would gather each week day at 10 a.m. for worship and then we would go our own separate ways on Sunday mornings for worship in whatever church we chose to go to.

6 days a week of worship and I don't remember missing very many of them. And then I was able to go back for a weekly convocation every year for over 40 years in the middle of the winter.

Every time those feelings of the support for one another would come back to me each year.

Community together has been a very important part of my life and I am sure it is the same for most of you.

Now, of course, we are doing the best we can to keep that community going as we go through the final stages of the coronavirus.

Back in the time recorded in our Gospel Lesson today, that wasn't the issue. But it seems the issue was that the worshippers had turned the temple into something it wasn't intended to be.

Jesus was concerned at how the temple was being used. It was being used as a market place. Jesus must have wondered if this had done something to change the importance of this place of worship.

At the same time, he used this situation to explain his future.

He used it as another sign of who he was and what he had come to do.

As he chased out those who were abusing the place of worship including the money changers, as they were called out of the temple, the Jews asked him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

They said to him, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

But he was using this as a sign of what he had come to do.

He was speaking of the temple of his body.

His own earthly life would change as he would give it up and be restored within 3 days.

Again, Jesus takes an earthly example to illustrate what was about to happen as he is headed to the cross.

Looking back, after Jesus 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.

Like those disciples, how often do we look back at history and suddenly things seem to fit together.

Jesus Christ became the temple or the sanctuary whom we would worship. He would give up his life, but he would return just as he said.

When I think of that temple, I am reminded again how much meaning a sanctuary can have.

Several years ago, our daughter, Kristi, was part of a study abroad program in Cuernavaca, Mexico taught by Augsburg College which she attended. Mary and I went down to visit her.

In the city of Cuernavaca, we were able to go inside a Cathedral established during the time of Cortes which dated back 500 years.

We walked inside and it had a dirt floor and there were people scattered in this beautiful ancient building kneeling and praying.

It was a powerful thing to see. Another time, we went down town Chicago from where my sister lives and again we walked inside the really beautiful Cathedral and again there were people kneeling down praying in there.

We all know how many times, visitors have commented on the beauty of the inside of our Trinity Lutheran Church. The stained glass windows and all the beauty inside is an inspiration in itself.

But having said that, again, we are reminded of the sign Jesus left with us in our lesson today.

The sign was that in spite of the beauty of any temple or cathedral or church sanctuary, Jesus is the one we worship.

As we go through this Lenten Season, may we be drawn closer to Jesus as we go with to the cross and then celebrate Easter which will change our lives and the world forever.