

**“Outrageous”** Sermon, March 4, 2018, Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 1:18-25. John 2:13-22

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2 Kings 5:9-14

<sup>9</sup> So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

<sup>11</sup> But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. <sup>12</sup> Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

<sup>13</sup> Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’!” <sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Entering the Temple, Jesus found those who were selling sheep and oxen, and doves. Moneychangers sat at tables exchanging foreign currencies for the Temple shekel. This was all taking place with the evident collusion of the priesthood. After all, (they probably reasoned) did not the people require

animals for sacrifices, and money for the Temple tax? Jesus was outraged to find in God's house. Jesus actions disrupted business as usual. He created a whip of small cords capable of striking at the core of our existence.

The Jews went to the temple to offer sacrifices to God and to experience God's forgiveness. They went there to gather with others to learn from the Rabbis. They also went to the temple to draw near to God in worship, prayer and understanding-it was God's dwelling place. It was a sacred place. Jesus went from outrageous behavior to outrageous prophecy. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." We know that Jesus was not actually promoting the destruction of the temple, or was he? We are always surprised by that which changes our lives, changes our physical living situations, changes our relationships, changes our thinking, and our future.

We likewise become used to the contexts in which change is forced upon us: new relatives through marriage, the death of loved ones, kids moving away creating empty nests, best friends relocating. Things that worked for us in the past, no longer seem to work for us now. We have been challenged by having to confront changes in society, by conflicts in human understandings, in scientific theories, and in international relations and even in us.

The destruction of the temple is a roadmap for resurrection life. The very contexts where we expect change is removed and we are surprised by the outrageous. Jesus' was saying, "In order to be my disciple, your emptying of self must be complete. In order to be my disciples, your progression toward the completeness God desires for you has more outrageous changes in store." Naaman the leper had been a leper all his life, but not he was

confronted with an outrage. He had been told that Elisha could heal him, but he viewed Elijah's prescription for change as outrageous.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But he also wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18:

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

What may seem an outrageous challenge to the way we and things were, is the destruction of our temple. This destruction is necessary if we, too, having seen the new glorious being in Christ, are to grow into Christ's outrageous likeness. Amen.