

*“All Hell Done Broke Loose Now”*  
A Sermon Preached by Shug Goodlow  
at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church  
Florissant, MO  
March 4, 2018  
John 2:13-22/Lent 3

Lord we thank you for the gift of your Word. As we listen today, we ask that you open our hearts and minds to hear your message to us. **Amen.**

Good morning. It feels so good to be back with you here at St. Barnabas. It has been far too long. I must tell you though that I am never far from you. As I sit on the altar every Sunday I look up and I see the St. Barnabas banner and I am immediately with you in spirit.

Many years ago I lived in an apartment building that was more like a little village than a multiple dwelling complex. The building had a horseshoe-shaped courtyard where the residents would often gather for group BBQs, courtyard chats, music and impromptu Soul Train lines. If one person or family had struggles we helped each other. Sometimes we helped each other in ways we probably shouldn't have. No electricity? No problem. We'll run a REALLY long extension cord to your place. Don't have enough food to feed your kids? No problem. We'll share what we have with you. Don't have the \$99 for the PPV boxing match this weekend? No problem. The guy in 1C will run co-ax cable from his apartment to your apartment for \$5.

So can you just picture it? Co-ax cable running from one central apartment to 9 or 10 apartments. And then imagine someone trips over

the co-ax and dislodges everything. In the middle of the telecast, **all** the televisions go black. The guy that actually paid loses his picture too. BTW...this loss of picture always happened at some pivotal moment sending anguished screams throughout the complex. Yes, that old girl named Karma stepped in and took care of all that was going on that **shouldn't** have been going on. But that didn't stop the indignation and the cries of outrage. Eventually, somebody would ask, "*What happened?*" and somebody else would answer, "*All hell done broke loose now.*" See, some folks don't want anybody messing with their stuff, even if it is ill-gotten gains or somebody got cheated. In this case, the cable company.

Our reading is from the gospel of John today but in fact, all four gospels give an account of this event. We are told that an otherwise merciful and loving Jesus charged through the temple like a bull in a china shop overturning tables and dumping the coins of unethical business transactions onto the floor. Jesus drove the money changers and animals from the temple. So this isn't the mild-mannered, turn-the-other-cheek Jesus we normally read about. The quality of mercy seems strained a bit and love does not appear to be overflowing in this account.

This depiction runs contrary to how we tend to think of Jesus as an easy going person but none of us is one dimensional; not even Jesus it would seem. And so apparently, overturning tables and disrupting the status quo is part of who Jesus is too.

Maybe this depiction speaks to one of the ways in which Jesus works in the world that we don't normally think of. But if we really think about

it, scripture tells us all kinds of ways that Jesus disrupts things that aren't quite right, and I think we are challenged to do the same.

In the same way that some of my fellow apartment building dwellers needed that hook-up to watch the boxing match, the money changers needed the sheep and the cattle to run their business in the Jewish temple. Jesus made it impossible for people to buy animals for the required sacrifices, and impossible for those who have come from all over the Empire to change their money and pay their tithes. Jesus is stopping the game, he's yanking the co-ax.

The problem wasn't just that people were selling animals. The problem was that they were cheating other people as they conducted their business. The other three gospels bring this sharply into focus for us. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus borrows from the prophet Jeremiah to accuse those who are selling things of making the temple a "den of robbers." Maybe Jesus raises a ruckus in the temple to draw attention to the corruption and to clean it up, if only for a short time. But then he starts talking about destroying the temple. In the gospel of John, this conflict in the temple takes on a different meaning. Jesus is not acting against corruption, or at least he is not *only* acting against corruption. Jesus brings the activity in the temple to a standstill in order to point to *another* holy place altogether. "*Destroy this temple,*" Jesus says, "*and in three days, I will raise it up.*"

And of course, when Jesus starts talking about destroying the temple the reaction is, "Destroy the temple?" What are you saying? Do you know

how long it took to build this temple? It has taken decades to build this place. “How do you think are you’re going to rebuild it in three days?”

And because we’re told a lot of things written in scripture aren’t really what they seem, but are really about something else, we are now told that Jesus was actually speaking of the temple of his body and I think... our bodies too.

Jesus was, and is, as inseparable from his body as you and I are from ours. Jesus’s body was, and is, the holy dwelling place of God. And, so too is ours. God is inseparable from Jesus’s body AND from ours.

During this season of Lent, we follow the body of Jesus as he travels to Jerusalem, as he forces the cattle and sheep out of the temple, as he washes the disciples feet. We follow him to the garden, where his disciples unsuccessfully fight off sleep while Jesus endures and prays about the torture that is imminent. We see Jesus beaten, crucified, taken down from the cross, and taken to a tomb. And in the stories of his resurrection, there exists the temple he spoke of, his temple...his body.

During this Lenten season we hear lessons that tend to make us more introspective. Today’s lesson gives us insight into Jesus’s regard for the temple. Something in our lives should be as precious to us as the “temple” is to Jesus. Something so special that we don’t want it to be defiled by misuse, mishandling or misappropriation.

Whatever that thing is, it’s different for each of us. I urge us all to seriously consider what that thing is for us. What is the meaning of today’s gospel reading? What is the message? Our challenge is to learn

why this text is significant, and how the cleansing of the temple is relevant to us and the way we live in the world today.

### Closing Prayer

Lord, may we continue to be stirred to faithfulness as we listen to, and learn from your Word. We thank you for turning tables over and upending our lives of complacency. We thank you for helping us see more clearly what we should hold sacred. And finally, we thank you for the many gifts you have given us. **Amen.**