

Mountain View 9 — Consumeristic Compromise and the Priestly Prophet

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Passages	John 2:13-17
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Introduction (Connection):

[Invite to John 2:13-17]

Tension:

Technology has advanced so much these days, hasn't it?

Technology at its most basic is defined as anything that makes life easier.

A few months ago, Tim Dutton offered to help me clean up the (quote) "hairy trees" in my front yard.

So he came over, we put on harnesses, he threw two ropes up into the tree, we hoisted ourselves up into said tree and used these hand saws to cut off a hundred or so branches and twigs.

We only got part way through one tree after a few hours and I was sore for three days.

A few days later, I wake up to find two massive trucks in front of our house with guys in bucket cranes using pole chainsaws giving to give the two

trees a quick buzz cut, and after an hour, both trees were done; PP&L had hired them to clear the lines.

All that tech was developed to make tree trimming so much more convenient.

You see, what is convenient drives technological development and business practices.

How many of you have already used Walmart's new Pickup option. Isn't it a game changer? I love how easy it makes shopping for my wife.

Let me catch everyone else up in this magical land of innovation: Walmart has created technology that allows a consumer to go online, create a digital shopping cart, place your order, schedule a pick up time, and you drive in, they have it all ready to go, they load your car up, and you drive away, possibly even with a lollipop and cold bottle of water.

A grocery run that once took 2 hours and included wrestling a squirmy toddler, rushing the 3 year old to the bathroom, disciplining some sort of misbehavior, feeding the three kids snacks to keep them happy, and apologizing profusely to the workers for the broken glass all over the floor because the toddler decided to throw a jar of pickles out of the cart, now instead just takes a total of half an hour from the time my wife leaves the house until the time she returns happy with three happy kids.

All of this is being driven by what is convenient for the consumer, the consumer's felt needs.

But... when you make these changes, don't you then start to miss out on some of the beautiful aspects to life?

Like, with this grocery Pickup, there's no more running into friends or church family, or if you're from Wayne County, every single one of your family members.

There's no more going to lane 5 to see Cathy, your favorite cashier, to see how her mom is doing.

Or what about those cranes and pole saws? There's no more climbing up into trees and hacking away at branches using your own muscles and developing your own strength.

I mean, why else is Tim Dutton still in the fit shape he is in at his age... which after last week, I am no dare going to even guess.

Its because he loves climbing trees!

When you start making consumer's felt needs the priority of how you operate, you start to lose out on important aspects of life that make it so beautiful.

And what we're going to find in our text for this morning is exactly what is happening around us today...

Consumeristic compromise... and they lose out on a lot more than just beauty.

Exposition:

John 2:13-25 — ***The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons,***

“Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”¹

Let’s start out with what’s going on in the background.

It’s Passover, probably the largest Jewish festival in all their history.

It was instituted back when Israel was enslaved to Egypt, the 9 plagues had already happened, the 10th plague was going to be the angel of death coming to take all the firstborn sons.

God had instructed the Israelites to find an unblemished lamb, sacrifice it, takes its blood, put it on the door posts and lintel, and the sign of blood would cause death to passover the home.²

Well, God commanded that every year they celebrate this passover with every family offering a sacrifice and holding a massive festival meal.³

So in Jesus’ day, families would come in from all over to make their sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

This meant it was prime-time for Jerusalem and high time for business in the temple.

This is like The Fourth of July where everyone comes into town and stand-still traffic finally becomes a thing in Honesdale.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 2:13–17.

² See Exodus 12:1-10

³ See Exodus 12:14; Deuteronomy 16:1-8

Thousands of families coming into the temple to offer their sacrifice, either cattle, sheep, or dove, all used in the sacrificial worship of the temple.⁴

If you were too poor to afford any of those options, pigeons were acceptable to sacrifice as well.⁵

And Jesus goes into Jerusalem as well and he enters into the temple and finds that the religious leaders had setup a market selling oxen, sheep, and pigeons, and money-changers were exchanging foreign currencies for acceptable temple coinage and collecting temple taxes.

Why is this a big deal? What all is going on here?

Well, most of these families were coming in from far away, many miles, and I don't know about you but my kids will only walk a mile before they're asking to ride on daddy's shoulders.

Imagine trying to bring in a few sheep or oxen from 80 miles out? It'd be pretty difficult.

So instead, the religious leaders were making available sacrifices you could purchase once you got to Jerusalem rather than having to tote your own along.

So, they saw their consumers felt needs and offered a business solution: "Come buy your pre-approved, unblemished, organic, free-range sacrifice from the temple; let us make it convenient for you."

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 178.

⁵ See Leviticus 14:21-22

So instead of the temple being a solemn place of prayer and worship, the ruckus of bartering merchants and the bleats and groans of the animals filled the temple air.

The religious leaders had compromised based on their consumers' felt needs.

And remember how I told you that, when you implement changes based on the consumer's felt needs, you, more often than not, lose out on something else more eternally significant?

How many of you raised some sort of farm animal growing up? Welcome to Wayne County.

I grew up a city boy where the most exotic thing someone raised was a cat that didn't have a tail.

But when you raise these animals, whether it is a bull, a sheep, or any animal, you spend a lot of time with it, right?

You stayed up late into the night to make sure it was safely born.

You probably gave it a name.

You raised it, fed it, played with it, protected it, cared for it, sacrificed for it...

Imagine, then, having to take that animal to the local temple to offer it as a sacrifice to atone for your sin, to take on the punishment for sin that you deserved.

That is devastating, is it not? You'd take sin more seriously.

But now, you don't have to raise your own sacrifice anymore, you can just purchase it from your local temple, literally right as you walk in.

Them compromising to meet the consumer's felt needs totally cheapened the experience of making the sacrifice and helped remove some of the guilt of sin.

In more modern terms, this is compromising by watering down the gospel because of **spiritual consumerism**... "what does the consumer feel they need, let's match that."

One preacher said that Spiritual Consumerism is when you do one of two things:

- 1) Put yourself at the center of worship, not God.
- 2) Emphasize the love of God to the neglect of the holiness of God.

When you put yourself before God, you put your own conveniences and felt needs above the true worship of God, you put your own comforts above everything else.

Guys, we live in an entertainment world. We are so overstimulated with fast pace entertainment and media that we have an overly-idealized sense of life with a really low pain-tolerance.

And when that happens in the church, church is no longer about discipleship and being shaped and formed, it is about being entertained, because we're consumers... we're here to consume.

I once saw a church back in NC hold an easter egg hunt where they had a helicopter come in and drop thousands of eggs over a field before hundreds of kids plunders the spoils.

Like... a real helicopter, dropping easter eggs... and I always looked at that church as being so consumer driven it was ridiculous!

But then I saw a serious post from Comedian John Crist where he said typically we as Christians will mock the church that does that or does an

NCAA backdrop on their stage during march madness... but that isn't just a church problem, that is a consumer problem.

The consumer creates the demand.

And what's so scary about this passage is that none of them had a clue that they were participating in spiritual consumerism... it was just the norm.

So how do you know if you are a spiritual consumer? When you start saying things like...

"I'm just not fed here anymore."

"I don't connect with anyone there."

"They don't have mocha latte's for me as I walk in."

"They don't do this style of worship or use this type of instrument."

"That preacher isn't funny enough."

"They don't have lasers and fog machines and light shows."

"I've got a 9 minute attention span and that's all I'm giving you or else I'm out, and by the way, don't make me feel uncomfortable."

"His sermons are too serious; can't we talk less about Jesus and more about something burdensome we all have in common and how Jesus carries our burdens?"

"They didn't give me a dunkin donuts gift card for visiting."

The consumer puts their felt needs above true worship, and if they can't get it here, they'll go somewhere else where they can get it.

Why do you think it is called, "Church Shopping???"

This is a very dangerous thing; when we start saying things like this, we are operating in a matrix of spiritual consumerism and by making our demands of the local church, we are trying to shape how the Church functions and ministers.

Hear me: **The Church is shaped by Christ, not consumers.**

Jesus is responsible for washing his Bride, for shaping his church, not you and I; we ought to be very cautious with what we demand from our local churches, and we as leaders ought to be careful to not bend and cater to the felt needs of spiritual consumers that cause us to water down or lose out entirely on the gospel... because we'd be reshaping the Bride of Jesus.

Do you think Jesus will put up with that? Absolutely not!

I mean, imagine if someone came up to my wife and started telling her all the things she isn't doing to meet their felt needs... I'd make me a whip too.

That's what Jesus does!

v. 15-17 — “And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, ‘Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.’”

This suggests that, not only did he use the whip on the animals, he used it on people too.⁶

He drives out massive oxen, he flips over tables of money, he cracks the whip...

⁶ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 164.

Now, if I see one of you come in here with a whip and start whipping people with it because you don't like something in the church, we'll have issues.

This isn't a justification for you to flip over your chair when you get mad at something in the church.

Why? Because you ain't Jesus.

Jesus, in perfect sinlessness and righteousness, drives them out... get on his level, and then we'll talk about making whips and cleaning the church.

What Jesus is doing is he is directly confronting spiritual consumerism in his turning over the tables, not just of the people coming in to purchase their sacrifice in the temple, but also those religious leaders who compromise beautiful and important aspects of the gathering to try to get more people in the doors to get more money.

Spiritual consumerism is not welcome in Jesus' gathering; that is a kind of faith Jesus rejects.

This brings us back to that second part of what spiritual consumers do... they emphasize the love and acceptance of God to the neglect of the holiness of God — don't make that costly mistake.

Jesus will purify his Bride, sometimes with a whip.

In all of this, we see two main characteristics of Jesus that are absolutely worth noting, and I'll say them as one.

Jesus is The Priestly Prophet

Let me first explain the prophet part, then the priest.

Prophets throughout OT history were some of the most unliked people in Jewish history because they always had something to say.

They would hear from the Lord and relay the message to the people, 90% of the time was calling out sin, pronouncing judgement, and calling Israel to repentance.

They said what needed to be said at great cost to themselves.

Jesus fearlessly boldly calls out the sin of his people... he takes on the role of a prophet... but he doesn't just leave them there, he's also a priest.

Priests had the privilege of making sacrifices that would atone for sin and remove its stain from the people.

Jesus drives them out. We look at that and think, "oh, that is judgment."

No, judgement would leave them in their sin... judgment would have just walked away and let them stay suffering in their sin and brokenness.

This is mercy; Jesus removes them from their sin.

The gospel tells us that Jesus is a priestly prophet.

He both calls out our sin and leads us out of our sin, and this isn't just a cute little phrase for our cute little savior.

Application/Challenge:

What this means for you and me is that Jesus loves you too much to be your cheerleader.

Can't you see that Jesus is willing to turn over churches that water down the gospel, that cheapen the true experience of worship by compromising to meet felt needs of her consumers?

We ought to be desperately begging God help us be a church that is Christ-exalting, Bible-preaching and Bible-obeying, on mission, that doesn't water down the gospel, who doesn't make a comfortable place for sin, who helps with the brokenness around us, and loves everyone fiercely with a holy love.

Jesus won't put up with spiritual consumerism in his churches... he loves his bride too much for that.

Don't think for a second that he is going to let you compromise by making trades, just like they didn't in the temple.

Don't make your faith a house of trade where you're trading...

- Spiritual health for convenience
- conviction for comfort
- worship for entertainment
- theology for experience
- the real gospel for watered-down "easy-believism"
- true transformation for outward moralism.

If that is where we are as a church, I pray he'd come and flip some tables and call out our sin and lead us out of it.

Why? Because I want the same heart as Jesus, the same passion and zeal as Jesus.

Did you see how this passage ends?

"Zeal for your house will consume me..." a quote from Psalm 69.

Look at the people around you.

Does an overwhelming passion for this, right here, consume your heart?

Do you care so deeply about what goes on here that it keeps you up at night in prayer?

I promise you, what we have here and what we do here as a church family will be some of the best things we'll ever have and do in this life.

Don't be a spiritual consumer who just wants to see what they can get out of this... be a spiritual contributor who gives and gives and gives with joy, to be poured out as an offering, spent for God's purposes in these people and around the world.

Conclusion (Cast Vision):

To help us in this pursuit, I've put together a weekly prayer guide to lift up our church in prayer, which you should have received on the way in.

There is one prayer a day, each day a different topic.

I want to challenge each of you to start today with this prayer guide for our church family and leadership; see if you can get through week 1, then week 2, and then keep going, and don't stop.

Husbands, lead your wives in this; take on that leadership of praying with your wife.

May zeal for this house consume us.

Let's pray.