Benediction: Jesus help us to always keep you at home in our hearts. I speak in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

A young mom from Fort Wayne, Ind., tells this story. Every month before attending my Bible study at church, I would tell my 3-year-old son, Chad, we were going to God's house. Each time we walked through the quiet sanctuary on our way to the nursery, Chad looked around in awe. One day, he stopped abruptly and asked, "Mommy, if this is God's house, how come He's never home?[[1]](#endnote-1)

For the Jews of Jesus’ day, the Temple was the ultimate house of God. Yet during the holy week of the Passover, the week in which the Jews remember that the Angel of Death passed over their homes while killing the firstborn in all the homes of the Egyptians and that event led to their emancipation, this holy house of God was so filled with other things, it was hard to realize that God was actually present. It was hard to realize that God was home.

God’s house was filled with cattle and sheep, bleating, and mooing and doing smelly things that animals do. God’s house was filled with moneychangers. Moneychangers served a purpose since pilgrims would come from all around to celebrate the Passover in the Temple. They would pay their Temple tax, basically their tithe, and buy animal sacrifices but were not allowed under the laws of Judaism to do so with Roman coins, which had pagan images.[[2]](#endnote-2) So the money changers would change the Roman coins, but, in doing so often charged an interest rate that was too high, taking advantage of the religious requirements to gouge people, a unfair practice that particularly affected the poor. [[3]](#endnote-3) Jesus cleansed the Temple of the animals and moneychangers because, rather than glorifying God, these practices distracted from God. They weren’t practices to be undertaken in the place where God lives.

As Christians, our bodies, minds and souls are Temples of God. They are places where God lives. Yet sometimes we fill them with so much other stuff that it’s hard to find God’s presence. We fill them with thoughts of how to get ahead at our jobs or thoughts of what we will buy that we may not necessarily need. We fill them with anger or hurt at wrongs lost past. We fill them with judgment of other people such as “if they work hard like I always do they would have money and not need help” or “they are way worse sinners than me because they do (fill in the blank) and I don’t.” We fill our minds and souls with negative thoughts or thoughts that we are unworthy, even though, of course, God made us perfect and always worthy. We do wrong things to our fellow humans or we fail to use the mind we have been given for the things of God. Rather than glorifying God, these practices distract from God. They make it hard to find God “at home” in our bodies, minds and hearts.

Our church, also is God’s house. It’s the Christian equivalent of the Jewish Temple. We don’t have animals running around or moneychangers. But sometimes we allow other things into our church that distract from God. Sometimes we close our minds to new ideas before discerning whether they come from the Holy Spirit. Or sometimes we leap forward with new ideas because that feeds our ego, rather than discerning whether they come from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we remain with practices that are unwelcoming to newcomers because these practices make us comfortable. Sometimes we focus too much on maintaining the status quo rather than being the living, flexible Temple that God wants us to be. Sometimes we fill our collective minds, and thus our whole local body of Christ, with negative thoughts rather than believing that the God who rose from the dead can help our church to rise and grow into the fullness that Christ means for it to be. These practices make it hard for others to find God at home in our church.

The good news is that Jesus still cleanses today. He cleanses our individual minds, bodies and hearts and he cleanses our church. He doesn’t come in with whips and angry shouts as He did at the Jerusalem Temple. Instead he gently knocks and waits for us to answer to let him back in to fill our temple again. If we ask and remain open, Jesus will cleanse ourselves and our church of all that fails to glorify God, of all that distracts from God. Jesus will make it easier for us and for everyone who sees us to find God at home in our hearts and our church.

Amen

1. Karen Ketzler, Fort Wayne, IN. *Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart*., Found on Preachingtoday.com [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Synthesis: A Weekly Resource for Preaching and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition, PNMSI Publishing Co., Inc**.** March 2018, Lent B, Week 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Dods, M. (1903). [The Gospel of St. John](https://ref.ly/logosres/exbbl63lu?ref=Bible.Jn2.12-22&off=1877&ctx=ade+to+the+traders.%0a~There+were+not+only+). In W. Robertson Nicoll (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible: Luke to Galatians* (Vol. 5, p. 137). Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)