

Sermon Title: **“Zeal for your house will consume me”**

Bible: **Exodus 20:1-17 & John 2:13-22**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on the third Sunday in Lent, March 7, 2021

Audience: about 30 YouTube Viewers

## **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, during this season of Lent, we examine ourselves, because we want to be close to you. Please lead us not to forget you during this time. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## **1. Traffic Tickets**

Lent is a season of self-examination and repentance by prayer, fasting or giving up, and self-denial. I will confess my traffic tickets. How many traffic tickets have you gotten and why? Is there anyone who does not have any traffic tickets? I had two traffic tickets. After I came to America in 2010, one thing that I did first is to get a driver's license. Even before getting my car, a driver's license is essential in the States, because I can use it as my ID, instead of my passport. I have had my car since 2012. So far, in 10 years, I only had two traffic tickets: the first ticket was for not stopping at a stop sign, and the other was for speeding. I needed to pay my traffic tickets, and to attend traffic school. These are not good experiences, but because of these, I believe that I was able to drive more carefully and safely, not only for myself, but also for other drivers. What are your lessons from receiving traffic tickets?

## **2. The Purpose of the Law**

Today's Scripture Readings came from the lectionary for the third Sunday in Lent. The Exodus reading is about ten commandments. How do you understand these ten commandments? When we read the first five books of the Old Testaments, they contain a lot of regulations and laws. I cannot know or remember all of these laws. But in Exodus here, we have only ten commandments. I used to memorize the ten commandments at Sunday school. Is there anyone who can memorize these ten commandments? Thankfully, in the Gospel of Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus summarized all of these laws into two: to love the Lord our God, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. These two are the purpose of the many laws in the Bible. We can remember these two commandments, or purposes: to love God and to love others. Furthermore, we can practice and act with love for God and others.

### **3. Purpose and Law**

Sometimes, we forget the purpose, when we just follow laws. This happened when Jesus entered the temple. At that time, people needed to bring animals as sacrifices. The temple was only in Jerusalem. This law might be okay for those who lived in Jerusalem. But for those who lived far away from Jerusalem, it was very difficult or impossible to bring animals. For them to worship God, selling and buying animals in the temple was allowed. Deuteronomy 14:24-26 said, "24 But if, when the Lord your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the Lord your God will choose to set his name is too far away from you, 25 then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the Lord your God will choose; 26 spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the

presence of the Lord your God, you and your household rejoicing together.” The purpose of selling animals is to help more people to worship God together. However, when they forgot the purpose of the temple, the place of worship, the temple became a marketplace.

Likewise, when we gather as a church, we should not forget our purpose. The main reason why we are here as a church is to love God and to love others. Survival is not our purpose. Feeling good is not our purpose. I believe that when we love God more and more, we will not only survive but also thrive. When we love one another more and more, we will not only feel better, but also become better followers of Jesus Christ.

#### **4. Sign: Temple as Jesus' Body**

The story of the cleansing of the temple was written in the other Gospels, too. But only in the Gospel of John did Jesus describe the temple as His body, as a sign. Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Death or closing the church is sad and painful. But I hope that we are not afraid of those things. As Christians, we believe in resurrection. What I am afraid of is not loving God, not loving others here and now. I hope that we are afraid of becoming a church that Jesus wants to destroy, rather than being afraid of closing the church. Today, we have holy communion. When we take the bread and drink the cup, let us accept Jesus Christ's passion for us and for our church. Jesus calls us to love God, to love others, and to become a church!

#### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, sometimes, we are afraid of death and closing the church. But Lord, please guide us to remember your resurrection and our resurrection. Please lead us not to forget your love and grace. You are our purpose! You are everything!

In Jesus' name. Amen.