



April 6: The Fake Out | John 2:13-25

Have you heard, **“The only constant in life is change.”** by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus?

Or **“Your life does not get better by chance, it gets better by change.”** Jim Rohn

Or **“Change begins at the end of your comfort zone.”** By Roy T. Bennett.

Change is one of the few constants in life. And while it can feel uncomfortable, it is often the very tool God uses to shape us into who we are meant to become.

Change may be what’s needed, what’s best but that doesn’t mean at times that I won’t pitch a hissy fit.

For the last eleven months, I have been working with my doctor to figure out a new medication for my diabetes. Metformin stopped working. And that is when the fun began.

We switched to generic Jardiance last May. But I couldn’t live with the constant severe sore throat. Last September we experimented with a generic Ozempic. But the constant queasiness and dizziness was just too much. Some Sundays, I gripped the pulpit because the room was spinning.

And now I am on a generic Rybelsus. It seems to be working. Except, ...except for one small inconvenience. After I take it in the morning, I have to wait 30 minutes before I can eat breakfast.

I didn’t think this would be that big of a deal. But I quickly realized my morning breakfast routine anchors my day, that it is possibly my only routine, and I liked it a lot. Didn’t know how much I loved it, until it had to change.

One morning a while ago, I was struggling. I can’t eat right away! My cats are monsters!

I was just beginning to work myself into a bit of a hissy fit, when a calm clear Voice entered my head. It came unbidden and unwelcomed to simply suggest, **“Why don’t you just add this time to your morning time with God?”**

Was that the first time I had heard a Voice like that during this change? No. I had just been ignoring it.

The Voice of reason suggested how peaceful it would be to simply be with God and a cup of tea...ignored it. Or add new noticings to my journaling I had been thinking of adding...ignored it.

But all I could think about was how any of those activities would just gouge into the time I wanted to give to my hissy fitting around.

I did not have a hissy fit. Exaggerating a bit. But it has not been easy.

It's not easy to be open to God in the midst of change. It's hard to see change as good. Hard to see change as a refining opportunity, to more fully relocate our trust on God.

That when the tables are turned, or literally upended from our text, it's a challenge to allow change to do its holy work.

But we can choose. We can use change to our advantage, to channel the energy of change into refocusing and recentering ourselves on following our Lord.

It is possible.

It's just not as fun as throwing a hissy fit.

I don't know what kind of coping mechanisms you have in your toolbox. What tricks have you learned to face change, to excel in adulting, and to aid you in maturing with God?

Do we all struggle with change?

Like struggle with the changes in our seasons? As Winter reluctantly gives way to Spring. Like last Sunday's ice storm or last Wednesday's slush sleet and thundering storm. Talk about hissy fit.

We might struggle with change in our government and all the changes being initiated so fast and furious.

Or we might struggle with changes in our bodies as we age.

We might struggle with changes in our church since Covid. Or struggle with changes that will come to us by fall.

So, since change doesn't seem willing to leave us alone, what are we to do with change especially when it is being initiated by God?

Well, turning to God and God's Word are good ways to cope with change. God gives us guidance and strength to change.

And to notice how Jesus' cleansing of the Temple is a personal challenge we all must embrace. This shifting our focus off religious externals onto our personal inner spiritual life and renewal with God.

Which also interestingly enough...is our journey in Lent.

Lent teaches us each year we can practice embracing this kind of change. Lent is a season in which we are invited to repent...which means change our minds and change our ways.

We are invited to spend 40 days in intentional reflection on the changes we need to make to draw closer to the Lord.

So, how is Lent unfolding for you? Can you hear where is God inviting change in your life? Where are you resisting?

The reason we are recentering ourselves in our own current experience in Lent...is our text teaches us to do this. Verse 13 informs us, **“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”**

This verse places us again into Jesus’ story. Places us again in God’s unfolding story of redemption and grace. Reminding us to get our bearings, to prepare for the radical changes yet to come in our journey with the Lord to the cross.

The next eight verses of John chapter 2, verses 14 through 22 are all about change. These verses tell the story of Jesus bringing dramatic change, a deep cleaning to the Temple. Jesus enters the holy place of worship but finds it had taken a change for the worse.

Historically, worshippers traveling long distances found it difficult to travel with their animals to be sacrificed at the Temple. So, they appreciated being able to buy what they needed when they arrived.

And finding someone willing to convert foreign currency into the Tyrian shekel, the only money acceptable for the required Temple tithe, was also appreciated.

But then greed seeped in. They began asking for more money for their services. Which then blocked the poor from being able to draw near to God. Changing the temple from a safe place of prayer and praise into a money-making machine.

In each gospel, Jesus is angry about this greed and passionately clears out the Temple. The disciples remember later what was written of the One to come, **“Zeal for your house will consume me.”**

Angered by the disrespect shown to His Father's house and the abuse of the poor, Jesus creates a whip from cords and with holy anger...drives out the merchants, money changers, sheep and cattle.

And when questioned by the Jewish leaders, “By what authority do you bring this kind of change!?” Jesus panting and sweaty and maybe with a crazed gleam in his eye, cryptically responds, **“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”**

They completely misunderstood him.

Thinking Jesus was referring to the physical Temple, notice this ironic conversation. They go on to school God in the flesh and Creator of all things.

They explain how it would be impossible for Jesus to bring about so much change to the Temple in three days. After all, puffed up with pride, it had taken them 46 years to rebuild it.

They didn't understand who they were talking to.

How easy it might be for us to fail to understand Jesus and the change he was bringing about. Jesus' cleansing of the physical temple was a symbolic and profound call for spiritual renewal and transformation. And that same call for renewal is for us, now.

The change Jesus seeks is both immediate and symbolic. He judges the existing religious practices that so easily prioritized profit over piety. He then calls them back to right use of the Temple, back to their relationship with God.

And he simultaneously, don't miss this, Jesus points to a deeper transformation that is required. A change of heart.

From a hard heart of keeping God at arm's length to a soft heart open, a drawing near in responsiveness to the Lord. A change from religion to worshipping Jesus.

And change from focusing on a building to a more accurate spiritual understanding of ourselves. In 2 Corinthians 6:16 we read this shocking news, ¹⁶ **...we are the temple of the living God.** We are the temple? God lives in us?

And then the implications in the next verse, ¹⁷ **Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. Dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."**

We are the temple now.

And Jesus is every bit as zealous for our spiritual growth now as he was back then.

Jesus did not shy away from shaking up peoples' complacency and comfort. But he didn't shake things up just for dramatic effect or shock value.

Jesus was and still is...pointing people away from what is fleeting and temporary back towards God.

How can we apply this teaching about Jesus and the Temple to our own lives? How can we become the kind of change we would like to see?

IF we are temples that Jesus resides in, it stands to reason there are probably things in our lives that might need to be upended, overturned, driven out, and cleansed.

When was the last time you asked for a spiritual audit? The last time you asked Jesus to point out what needs to go or what needs to be added?

King David invited this kind of holy audit. David asked God to identify, to put a finger on anything that needed to change in his life when he wrote,

“Search me, O’ God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

And David waited for God to test him, to know his heart, and to lead him. What might happen if you prayed that daily for the rest of Lent?

Imagine with me, it will take courage, imagine what Jesus would “upend” if he walked into our church today? Are there old ways of doing things that no longer serve their purpose? Or what new ways of doing things might Jesus be calling us to embrace?

And finally, if we asked for the kind of help King David asked for, do we really believe Jesus would remain silent? Or that God would have nothing to say?

Time of Reflection: Where in your life are you currently experiencing disruption or change? What might Jesus be telling you to let go of so that something new can emerge?