



What's Your Next Move?

Sunday, February 2, 2025

Rev. Dr. David R. Schultz, Aledo UMC

Gospel Lesson, John 2:13-22

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” [Psalm 69:9]

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

²⁰ They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Sermon, “What's Your Next Move?”

February 11, 2024: Brock Purdy and the San Francisco 49ers looked across Allegiant Field in Paradise, Nevada, to face Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs.

Brock Purdy gave us one of the great storylines in sports history: He was the very last pick in the 2022 NFL draft. That player has come to be known as “Mr. Irrelevant” because

What's Your Next Move? John 2:13-25, page 2

nobody expects the last man drafted to ever make his team, let alone become the starting quarterback. But because of injuries to the starting quarterback and the backup quarterback, this rookie out of Iowa State University became the starting quarterback in Super Bowl LVIII.

In contrast, Chiefs Quarterback Patrick Mahomes had already started in three Super Bowls, beginning with Super Bowl LV in 2020. And he already owned two Super Bowl rings.

Adding to the drama, Taylor Swift was in the audience, thanks to her budding relationship with Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce. That created “the Taylor Swift Effect,” and Super Bowl LVIII became the most-watched U.S. broadcast since the Apollo 11 moon landing way back in 1969.

As it turned out, the Brock Purdy Cinderella story came to an end in overtime as Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs won the game in a thriller. It was the first time a team won back-to-back Super Bowls since the Patriots did it in 2005.

Almost immediately, Chiefs fans wondered, “What’s your next move?” Are you going to pull off the very first NFL three-peat? Of course, we know the story, and next Sunday, the Chiefs will try for that elusive third Super Bowl victory in a row against Jalen Hurts and the Philadelphia Eagles.

With next Sunday’s Super Bowl, the Chiefs will have played in five of the last six Super Bowls, and they’ve won three of those five games. Like it or not, whenever the Chiefs have succeeded, their next move has been to try and build on that success with more success.

In contrast stand the 1997 Florida Marlins baseball club—perhaps the most annoying team in sports history. The Marlins were established in 1993, and within their first four years, the front office bought a team who won the 1997 World Series—such gluttons! And in 1997, the Chicago Cubs had gone 89 years without a World Series ring.

In 1997, baseball fans wondered, What’s your next move, Marlins? Shockingly, after winning the World Series, the next move for the Florida front office was to gut the roster. They shed \$40 million in payroll in what became arguably the biggest fire sale in sports history. And just one year after winning the World Series, the Marlins finished with a miserable record of 54 wins to 108 losses. It’s one thing to go on a tear; it’s another thing to tear it all down. Oh, the Cubs won 90 games that year and played in the postseason.

Last week you and I paid a little visit to Cana. The good news is that we attended a wedding. The bad news is the wine ran out. The good news is that Jesus was at that same wedding and he turned water into wine—and it was the best wine of the celebration. It was the first of the signs through which Jesus revealed his glory—and his disciples put their faith in him.

Nobody had ever done that before! That was awesome, Jesus! But now, what’s your next move, Jesus? Have you thought about feeding a couple thousand people with just a few filet-o-fish sandwiches? I could run over to McDonald’s and pick up a half dozen for you. Or you could try stilling a storm, Jesus. That would be cool.

Or how about healing a blind man, Jesus? You could spit on the ground and make a little mud and rub it on his eyes. That would be cool. And there’s a blind man begging for alms

What's Your Next Move? John 2:13-25, page 3

at the city gates; I could go and bring him to you, Jesus. Or you could go to him. Wait. Where are you going, Jesus. That's not the way to the blind man at the city gate. That's the way to the temple, Jesus. Why do you want to go there? It's almost Passover; it'll be crowded around the temple. And crazy chaotic with all those vendors selling calves and goats and sheep and turtle doves for sacrifice. It's a tourist trap, Jesus. And you know how expensive things are at those tourist traps.

So what's your next move, Jesus? Where are we going? The temple? That's perfect! You can tell those teachers of the law that they've got nothing on you! You can change water into wine! Are you going to do it again, Jesus? Is that what you're up to? But what's that look in your eyes, Jesus? It's kind of scary. I'm kind of freaking out. You're scaring me, Jesus.

Jesus! You just tipped over that vendor's table! There goes all his money; it's flying everywhere! And there goes another one! And another! And those turtle doves—you've released them! Look at them fly! Now I'm really freaking out, Jesus! You're really scaring me!

And then Jesus cries out: "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"

And then you remember the words of Psalm 69:9: "Zeal for your house will consume me." *I think I get it, Jesus. I think I get it.*

But I don't think the disciples got it. At least not until after his Passion and his resurrection.

Let's face it: it's quite shocking that Jesus would pull a stunt like this. But it wasn't a stunt. It was a sign, just as turning water into wine was a sign pointing to a greater truth.

The Temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn't just a church on a street corner. It was the center of worship and society. It was also the place where you would find more animals—living or dead—than anywhere else. Most importantly, it was the place where God had promised to live among his people.

And this was where the then unknown prophet from Galilee came in and turned everything upside down. We've heard the story so often that we've forgotten just how shocking it was.

Jesus' action was a sign that all of this was coming to an end: the Temple with its system of sacrificial atonement, its laws, and its corruption would soon be superseded by Jesus Christ himself. For he would soon become the ultimate once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin. And he was free from corruption. And he would soon become the Head of the Church—the new Temple of his body. And all those who call upon his name and believe in him would become members of that sacred Body.

This is the first time that Jesus hinted at his own death and resurrection. The Jews asked him, "What sign can you show us to prove you have the authority to do all this?"

Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Jesus wasn't talking about the temple of brick and mortar; he was talking about his body. That meant that at the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus was focused on his goal: the cross of our salvation.

What's Your Next Move? John 2:13-25, page 4

This was more than saying, “Here’s the correct way to use my Father’s house.” This was a sign that the temple was about to be replaced by Christ himself. Jesus wasn’t creating chaos; chaos and corruption were already there.

And that brings up something that we saw this past week in Washington DC. Some would say that our newly inaugurated administration intentionally “overturned the tables” as it were.

On Monday, administration ordered a pause on all federal grants—including federal funds which had already been appropriated by Congress. This affected hundreds of thousands of people—including our son who is an academic scientist and whose work is funded by grants; his years of research may be lost if funding is not restored. And he’s not alone. At risk are years of research done by scientists who are looking for cures and treatments for cancer and Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease and you name it: it’s all at risk of loss by a president with a track record of being opposed to science.

But that’s not all. On Tuesday morning, state officials in all fifty states were unable to access federal money which had already been appropriated by Congress for Medicaid, HeadStart, low-income housing and energy assistance, Meals on Wheels, unemployment benefits, veterans benefits, fire and police departments—in fact, not a single federal dollar was accessible—despite the fact that you and I have faithfully paid our federal taxes. Who’s keeping the money and why?

The next day, our administration said, “Oops. We didn’t mean for that memo to be released.” So funding resumed. But what’s your next move? An immediate injunction stopped the funding freeze from going into effect, but only until February 3, 2025. That’s tomorrow. And if the funding freeze resumes, people with no where else to turn will turn to the church. And they’ll go begging from church to church, looking for food and rent and utility assistance. How will this impact our community?

Now, my friends, it is the honor of a lifetime for me to serve as the pastor of a church that has practical compassion for those in need through ministries such as Caring Hearts and Loving Hands and Network of Caring. But we have our limits. Unlike the federal government, we do not print money. We only collect tithes and offerings. We do not collect taxes.

For some the chaos that was unleashed on our country this past week is exactly what they had hoped would happen when they cast their ballot for this administration. They want our president to tear down our federal government and rebuild it according to his agenda. Some might even make comparisons to Jesus overturning the tables in the temple. But make no mistake about it: what Jesus did was an act of social justice. What our administration did was an act of greed and an unprecedented grab for power and control.

My friends, it is not my job to tell you how to vote. But it is my job to speak out against injustice and greed and the lust for power. So, like Amos of old, “Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24).