

Third Sunday in Lent  
Sermon Text: John 2:13-22  
Date Preached: March 15, 2009

The disciples didn't get it right away. Jesus drives out the moneychangers from the temple. Jesus gives a mandate to stop making my Father's house a marketplace.

The Jews who no doubt were upset by Jesus actions ask for a sign, to which Jesus responds, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The temple that Jesus speaks of is not brick and mortar; it is his own body. The Jews questioning him and the disciples didn't understand what he was talking about.

This is evident in how John concludes this passage. "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken."

When the disciples looked back at some of the moments they experienced with Jesus, things became clearer than they were in the moment. In other words, they didn't get it the first time. And just because they didn't understand at first, Jesus didn't give up on them.

They didn't understand it the first time when Jesus said that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, be rejected by the elders and Chief Priests, be handed over to death and on the third day rise again. They didn't understand it the second or even the third time Jesus spoke those words. Nonetheless, they kept following Jesus. Again, Jesus didn't give up on them.

How often is it when we hear a Biblical text that we don't understand what it means right away? If that is you, don't feel bad. Such is the reality of our humanness. In many respects we can relate to the earliest of Jesus disciples.

When I was in school, my poorest subject was math. In fact, I sometimes joke that I went into the ministry so I could avoid deciphering mathematical equations. I would never get what was being taught the first time. However, to many of my classmates, mathematics is as easy as reading a children's story.

Now, if you were to put those same classmates of mine in with me in a class on theology or biblical studies, I would likely have an easier time understanding what is taught than some of them would. And even while some things in theology and

the Bible come easy for me, there is much that I too struggle to understand.

Thus, regardless of how expert we are in our careers or vocations, we continue to grow in our understanding. We may not always understand things the first time around.

This is not to say that we are dumb. There are things we have learned about the Bible, about our relationship with God that have come over time. We've grown in our study and how our faith relates to our daily life. Just because we may not understand something the first time, doesn't mean that it is beyond our understanding. Just as Jesus didn't give up on his disciples then, he doesn't give up on us now.

Our God is a persistent God. God wants us to know him. God wants us to know how to live faithfully. Jesus showed his disciples and the church to come what that entails.

One important aspect to living faithfully is to make the connection between what we do every day of our lives to our faith and belief. In other words, our role as parents connects to our faith. Our careers connect to our faith. We may not see how, but that is where

the Holy Spirit meets us. It is the Spirit that helps us relate who we are as individuals to who we are in relationship with God, with our neighbor and with the environment in which we live.

So how do we make these connections? Start by telling others why you've entered a certain vocation. Did God have anything to do with it? Can we answer that question by saying that God has given me the talent to be a nurse, an electrician, a musician, or whatever our career maybe.

People have come up to me on occasions and said, Pastor, I could never do your job. We'll guess what. It would be very easy for me to say the same thing in response. There are many jobs, I couldn't do, because I wouldn't get what I need to understand nor has God given me the talent.

Likewise, another way of answering why we do what we do can help us relate to God. We fulfill our role as parents not because of the ramifications that may come if we don't, but we fulfill our role as parents to the Glory of God. We do our jobs, not simply to earn paychecks, but to honor God. We serve in the church, not simply because we may need a volunteer, but to serve to the glory of God.

In these and other ways we make connections between how we live and our life of faith. We may not make these connections right away.

One of the blessings we can bestow on one another through the church is in the course of our conversations. There lies the opportunity for us to affirm in each other just how much God cares about us, from the big things and worries, down to the smallest detail.

Together, the Holy Spirit helps us to grow in our relationship with God and with each other. Together, we come to deeper understandings about what it means to truly live as God's children. No, we may not get it the first time, or even the second or the third time.

But fear not. Stay within the fellowship of Christians here in church, with fellow Christians at work or in service organizations. Keep praying for God's wisdom. Continue to ask God for understanding. Simply put, God isn't going to give up on you. God has invested too much into you to quit. You see, God has invested his son into our relationship with him.  
AMEN.