Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's house is for worshipping God. Jesus loved His Father's house, and we honor it too.
Bible passage: John 2:13–17. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." *John 2:16 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: That Doesn't Belong! (5–10 minutes)

Describe a place with one thing that doesn't belong. The first child to spot it shouts, "That doesn't belong!" and says why. 1) A kitchen with a stove, a sink, a fridge and a lawn mower. 2) A classroom with desks, books, pencils and a cow. 3) A fish tank with water, fish, rocks and a birthday cake. Let kids make up a few of their own. Ask: *Why does it matter what a place is used for?* Say: "When Jesus walked into the temple, He found something that didn't belong."

2. Bible story: My Father's House (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to John 2. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

The passover. Look up John 2:13. "The Jews' passover was **at hand**," which means it was near. The passover was the feast when God's people remembered how the LORD "passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt" (Exodus 12:27). Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

What Jesus found. Look up John 2:14. In the temple, God's house, Jesus found people selling **oxen** (cattle), sheep and doves, and the **changers of money** sitting there. Changers of money traded one kind of money for another. God's law told people to bring offerings to the LORD from their cattle, their sheep and their doves (Leviticus 1:2, 1:14). John doesn't say why the sellers were in the temple, but God's house had been filled with buying and selling.

What Jesus did. Look up John 2:15. Jesus made a **scourge of small cords**, a whip of small ropes. He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen. He poured out the changers' money and **overthrew** (turned over) the tables.

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What Jesus said. Look up John 2:16. To them that sold doves He said, "Take these things **hence**" (away from here), "make not my Father's house an house of **merchandise**." My Father's house means God's house, the temple. Merchandise means buying and selling: they had turned God's house into a market.

What the disciples remembered. Look up John 2:17. His disciples remembered that it was written, "The **zeal** of thine house hath eaten me up." Those words are in Psalm 69:9. Zeal is a strong, burning love for something. Love for God's house filled Jesus up.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. The temple was God's house, a place to worship Him. What had it turned into (John 2:16)?
2. Jesus made the scourge first, then drove them out (2:15). Why do you think John tells us that?
3. The disciples remembered a verse when they saw what Jesus did (2:17). Why is it good to know God's Word by heart?
4. What can crowd out worship when we come to church today? (Talking, phones, thinking about other things.)
5. What does it look like to have zeal for God's house?

Recall questions

1. What feast was near? *(The Jews' passover, John 2:13)*
2. What was the scourge made of? *(Small cords, 2:15)*
3. What did Jesus say to them that sold doves? *("Take these things hence," 2:16)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **hence** means away from here, **my Father's house** means God's house, and **merchandise** means buying and selling. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus loved God's house, and God wants us to come to Him. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: in church, put away anything that pulls you from worship. Sing, pray and listen like you are in God's house, because you are.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. John 2:13: What feast was at hand? *(The Jews' passover)*
2. John 2:13: What city did Jesus go up to? *(Jerusalem)*
3. John 2:14: What three kinds of animals were being sold? *(Oxen, sheep and doves)*
4. John 2:14: Who was sitting in the temple? *(The changers of money)*
5. John 2:15: What did Jesus pour out? *(The changers' money)*
6. John 2:15: What did He overthrow? *(The tables)*
7. John 2:16: What did Jesus call the temple? *(My Father's house)*
8. Psalm 69:9: What had eaten Him up? *(The zeal of thine house)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your house, where we can worship You together. Give us zeal for Your house like Jesus had, and help us come to worship You and not for anything else. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: John 2:15 says Jesus "drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen." It does not say He struck anyone, so don't add it. Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Matthew 21:12–13 and Mark 11:15–17 tell a similar account; this lesson follows John 2 only, so every detail comes from John.

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