

**“The Communion of the Holy Spirit”**  
**John 2:13-22**  
**The Confession of 1967 9.24**  
**Sermon #92**  
**Lent 3**  
**52nd Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
**3.7.21**

**John 2:13-22 CEB**

**13** It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** He found in the temple those who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves, as well as those involved in exchanging currency sitting there. **15** He made a whip from ropes and chased them all out of the temple, including the cattle and the sheep. He scattered the coins and overturned the tables of those who exchanged currency. **16** He said to the dove sellers, “Get these things out of here! Don’t make my Father’s house a place of business.” **17** His disciples remembered that it is written, *Passion for your house consumes me.*

**18** Then the Jewish leaders asked him, “By what authority are you doing these things? What miraculous sign will you show us?”

**19** Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple and in three days I’ll raise it up.”

**20** The Jewish leaders replied, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?” **21** But the temple Jesus was talking about was his body. **22** After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered what he had said, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

## **The Confession of 1967 9.24**

The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death. The teaching of apostles and prophets guides men in living this life, and the Christian community nurtures and equips them for their ministries.

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

“The new life finds its direction in Jesus...” New life.

I think many of us can appreciate the words “new life”.

New life after the death of a spouse. New life after a divorce. New life after a move. New life after tragedy. New life after Hurricane Florence. New life during COVID. New life post-COVID, whenever that will be.

New life doesn't have to come out of heartache, of course, but it seems we see, more often than not, a new life that arises because of a crisis.

Certainly, this moment presented to us in John 2 is a crisis and Jesus had to get his hands dirty to give direction to the new life that is only made possible because of his life, death, and resurrection. People were making the Temple a place of business or in other

translations, a den of thieves. Selling the animals to be used as sacrifices. Sacrifice: An act that was required for faithful Jews to do. Yet, many who were under the thumb of the Roman Empire were poor and were probably paying through the nose. Obviously, many in power turned a blind eye to this practice. But, in the moment of this crisis that had been accepted as normal, Jesus came in, flipped some tables, and chased a bunch of people and animals out of the Temple. In this moment, Jesus demonstrates what a new life looks like. This new life doesn't look like the old one. It doesn't accept the behaviors that were once viewed as perfectly normal. This new life confronts and challenges the powers that be.

In the excerpt we read together from the Confession of 1967, it comes in Section C. The Communion of the Holy Spirit. Subsection

1. The New Life. This new life is a result of the work of our Savior. This new life is initiated by the Holy Spirit. Because of the Holy Spirit's power, reconciliation can happen.

Toward the beginning of this section of the Holy Spirit, C67 tells us that the Holy Spirit "creates and renews the church as the community" so that we are reconciled to God and one another. In order to experience this new life that turns away from the old ways, the Spirit moves us to respond to this new life found only in Christ who demonstrated this new life through "his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death."

Absolutely do we see Jesus' anger play out in John 2. I think he was also acting with compassion seeing so many people probably being forced to pay for more than they could afford in order to live faithfully as Jews under Roman rule. In that moment before he made the whip from ropes, Jesus probably wonders "What on earth is happening??" I think in that moment before the righteous anger sets in and he begins to make the whip, he knows people must change their ways.

Back on July 20, 1969, many of you remember Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landing on the moon on the Apollo 11 mission. Of course, many of us know those famous words uttered by Armstrong "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Aldrin, though, was the second person to walk on the moon and he did something just as significant.

Aldrin was an Elder at Webster Presbyterian Church in the Houston area.<sup>1</sup> He had been given permission to celebrate Communion on the moon. Aldrin was cognizant of the fact that hundreds of thousands of people had worked so hard over the past decade to arrive to this moment. He, Armstrong, and many others realized that they were not there just as men or Americans, but as representatives of humanity.

And mind you, on July 20, 1969, so much tragedy had already occurred. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and Robert Kennedy had been assassinated the previous year. The Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement had reached a particular moment already, but were still playing out. I imagine Aldrin had to take in this

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/buzz-aldrin-communion-apollo-11-nasa>

moment, like Jesus. Aldrin recognized the heaviness in his heart. Probably the same heaviness Jesus had in John 2. Aldrin probably also recognized the heaviness of hearts around the world due to war and bigotry. Division was so rampant already. Yet, looking at the Earth, the political lines set on maps were absent. Looking at the Earth and leading a moment of prayer and Communion on the moon, he was demonstrating the new life found only in Jesus Christ because of the Spirit's leading.

Aldrin followed the Spirit's leading at a time when it would've been easy to keep his head down. He didn't make a whip out of ropes to chase people out, but he did reflect the Savior's compassion for a world in turmoil. Aldrin acted out of love.

On the other hand, Jesus did make a whip out of ropes and did what was needed to be done not simply because he wanted to start a fight. He saw something gravely wrong that needed to be fixed. Jesus acted out of love.

Whether it was the creation of new wine at Cana, feeding the masses, chasing the money changers out of the Temple, or facing his execution, Jesus did it all out of love. And out of his love, reconciliation was made possible between us and God, us with each other, and us with ourselves. It is because of the Holy Spirit's power are we able to gratefully respond, like Aldrin, to not only give thanks in spite of hardship in our world, but to act with compassion in the midst of the heartache that so many in our world face every day.

Siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.