

*13The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" 17His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" 19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22After 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.*

*23When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. 24But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.*

Shock and awe.

Bombs and missiles intended not so much to kill and destroy as to turn the heart of an enemy – such noise and chaos that the will to fight will be broken and war will be shortened.

Shock and awe.

A long time ago Jesus undertook a shock and awe campaign of his own.

Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem, gathered some cords together to make a whip and drove the merchants out of the temple of the Lord. He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. "He cried out, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" Jesus was getting everyone's attention – his was a symbolic act. When the day was over the animals were all back in their stalls, the coins had been picked up – the money changers were dealing once more. Jesus was not so interested in changing the practices at the temple as he was in signaling a regime change.

When asked, "What sign can you show for doing this?" Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The people standing there thought he was speaking of the physical temple in which they were standing. Later his disciples realized that Jesus was speaking of his body as the place where God lived and was worshipped. The plan was not for Jesus to destroy the Jerusalem temple but rather that the powers that ruled

the temple would gather to destroy Jesus. “Destroy this temple,” he said to them, “and in three days I will raise it up.”

The Jerusalem temple was more than a structure, more than a stone building. Through the system of sacrifices and observances practiced there the very person of God was defined. God is the one who demanded the people to bring sacrifices and offerings. Through what the people offered God was honored. Our first lesson is the account of the Lord giving the Ten Commandments to the people. Obeying these words of God was also part of the offering the people brought. In return for what the people gave God would give blessings. Jesus was bringing down this whole system.

But Jesus on that day of shock and awe removed everything the people would give. Their animals for sacrifice, their coins for offering removed. And he spoke of his own body as the temple, the place where God would meet humans. He signaled a new reality.

St. Paul speaks of this new reality in our second lesson: “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” The power God chooses in this world is in the temple of Jesus body being destroyed on the cross. Not in the commands and the demands, not in the destroying power of the flood of Noah’s time, not in the marching of armies as in the time of David and Saul, but the power of God in this world would be in the foolishness of the cross.

Empty hands. That is what fourth graders will offer to God this morning, and forty year olds, and ninety-four year olds. Empty hands. Hands that will be filled with the body and blood of Jesus, the sacrifice of Jesus. All human religion is based on the idea that humans do what is needed to please God. But in Jesus everything depends on what God gives us – every thing depends on our hands being open and empty to receive Jesus.

Now that seems foolish to anyone who wants to make this a better world or to make of us better people. Tell those fourth graders how they must act. Make them learn and live the rules. Shape them , mould them so they can be a proper offering to God.

But in the foolishness of God God's own Son is offered to them.

Empty hands, empty hearts, waiting to be filled with Jesus.

What will happen then, when the love of God is in you? Will there be a regime change in your heart and your life? Will the foolishness that Jesus chose be the power of God in your life? Will your life become Jesus own body offered to another whose heart and hands are empty? Who knows what might happen when empty hands receive Jesus?

I do not know the answers to these questions. So I will hold out my empty hands and you will hold out your empty hands and we will see what God will do with empty hands.