
Reflection: Reclaiming the Temple John 2: 13-22

Unlike the other gospel-writers, John sets “the cleansing of the Temple” at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry rather than in His final days. The deeper meanings of the story best fit in that position as John seeks to help us understand who Jesus is and is about.

But first, what was your reaction to the incident?

Gentle, meek, mild, insipid. What kind of Saviour is that?

Wishy-washy, ineffective. Not someone we would respect.

So why is it shocking to discover that Jesus is a man of passion, seized with righteous anger, wielding a whip, driving out those who drive out others, and make God’s house exclusive?

Why should we be surprised that Jesus doesn’t just speak out

..... but takes action to ensure that all people, everywhere have access to the love of God?

& that following this feisty man means that we too must be people of action,

.... who are willing to do something about who and what we believe?

Jesus was angry that the poor were being exploited and that Israel,

God’s people, was denying its calling to share God’s light for the nations.

Let me explain: to buy a dove would have cost a full day’s wage but a “*guaranteed unblemished dove*”, alone acceptable for sacrifice, would cost 3 weeks full wages – and it could only be bought from the licensed traders in the Court of the Gentiles: it was a racket! & Temple tax was 2 days’ pay but Gentile coins bore “Graven images” and it cost another day’s pay to have your money changed into Temple coinage. Blatant exploitation of pilgrims! From all parts of the Roman world they came, Gentile proselytes, attracted to Jewish faith by Jews they met in their home towns; excited to come to their great Temple, they found the only place they were allowed to go was like a noisy market.

That fired His anger most.

Neither Gentile coins nor Gentile people were welcome. Called to be a light to the nations, the people of God were denying their mission.

John was clear that the Lord had come to His temple as the prophet Malachi had promised He drove the sheep and cattle out: His new Temple has no need for animal sacrifice now that the Lamb of God is offered.

I will raise the Temple in 3 days? Through His resurrection, He Himself is the spiritual temple where God is truly worshipped.

Zeal for your house will consume me – His friends realised that Jesus had quoted from Psalm 69:9 but the Sadducees, the ruling establishment party who did not believe in resurrection were angered by His claim and used it as evidence at His trial.

While the Temple leaders would have been furious with Jesus, so surely would have been the traders and money-changers trying to earn their crust and unaware of how they defaced the Temple they may have thought they were serving. Which begs the question: what traditions do we cling to maybe without realising that they too deface God's holiness?.

“Destroy this temple...” He said – and they did;
persisting in their greed and prejudice, they brought destruction on themselves.
If profit matters more than people and prejudice more than unity, these things lead to death.

It's not about church fayres or dual purpose buildings or even Sunday selling;
it is much more serious than that!

Still, Jesus challenges His Church:
if we set profit above people;
if we let prejudice hinder unity,
if we fail to love,
if we neglect our mission,
..... we shall bring judgement and destruction on ourselves.