

Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 3



Jesus Cleanses the Temple

CLEAR OUT OF HERE!

(JOHN 2:13-25)

In the Gospel accounts of Mark, Matthew and Luke, the episode of the cleansing of the Temple follows the entry of Jesus and his disciples into Jerusalem and provides the reason for the final plot to bring about Jesus' death.

In the Fourth Gospel (John) version, the pretext for this conspiracy is the raising of Lazarus, so the evangelist places this well-attested event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The area of Judaea is that of hostility to Jesus, Jerusalem is the chief city in the region and the Temple is the religious focal point of the capital. The Passover is the principal Jewish pilgrimage feast, so the setting of today's event could not be more significant. Three terms are used to denote the place: "Temple", "my Father's house" and "sanctuary". The first refers to the physical building; the second, the house of the Lord (the traditional way of referring to the Temple) which has become a "market"; the third, the inner sanctuary, the place of God's presence to the people of Israel.

In the Fourth Gospel, we find the theme of *replacement*: Jesus in himself replaces the feasts and institutions of Judaism. The Temple was the place of privileged access to the presence of God for Israel. The discussion with the Jewish authorities plays on the ambiguity of the physical stone structure and its ultimate purpose as the place where God's presence is located in a special way. As a result of Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus himself will be the place where God's presence is accessible to people. ■

LEARN

In the Fourth Gospel, the term "the Jews" usually refers to the religious and political leaders in Israel, not to the people as a whole.

In this Gospel version, Jesus replaces, in himself, the Temple as the focus of God's presence.

The Temple was the place of sacrifice: after its destruction by the Romans in AD 70, it was never rebuilt and the sacrificial cult ceased in Judaism.

SAY

God, give me the courage to change the things I can.
(from the Serenity Prayer)

DO

Reflect on what makes you angry in society or your local area: decide what you can do about it – and do it.

REFLECT

The Gospel account of the driving out of the merchants from the Temple precincts is the only one in the Gospels which shows Jesus in a fury. The merchants were providing the animals required for the rituals of sacrifice: the money changers were converting Roman coinage bearing the emperor's image into acceptable currency for use within the sacred enclosure; there is no suggestion of racketeering. Although there was nothing technically wrong with what they were doing, Jesus sees it as an abuse, distracting from the purpose for which the Temple was built, and takes drastic action to rectify the situation.

Anger is an emotion which is often misunderstood. It is essentially the appropriate reaction to unjust situations or the exploitation of the weaker members of society. It is usually the driving force behind much-needed reforms, for instance in regard to slavery, child labour and discrimination of any kind. It is, indeed, listed among the seven deadly sins, but if we look at these titles, we will find that they contain a positive value and that the "sin" is, in fact, an extreme and inappropriate expression of this. Anger enables a constructive response to injustice: uncontrollable rage is destructive, both to the person concerned and to others involved. Without anger, there would be a resigned acceptance of unfair treatment: this is not the message of the Bible, of the prophets or of Jesus. It may be that we do not get angry enough when we should. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

My eyes are always on the Lord,
for he rescues my feet from the snare.
Turn to me and have mercy on me,
for I am alone and poor.

COLLECT

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness,
who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving
have shown us a remedy for sin,
look graciously on this confession of our
lowliness,
that we, who are bowed down by our
conscience,
may always be lifted up by your mercy.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Exodus 20:1-17

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the book of Exodus.

>God spoke all these words. He said, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

"You shall have no gods except me.<

"You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God and I punish the father's fault in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate me; but I show kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

>"You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God to misuse it, for the Lord will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it.

"Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. < For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for the Lord your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it sacred.

>"Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God has given to you.

"You shall not kill.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his."

The word of the Lord.<

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 18

Response:

You, Lord, have the message of eternal life.

1. The law of the Lord is perfect,
it revives the soul.

The rule of the Lord is to be trusted,
it gives wisdom to the simple. (R.)

2. The precepts of the Lord are right,
they gladden the heart.
The command of the Lord is clear,
it gives light to the eyes. (R.)

3. The fear of the Lord is holy,
abiding for ever.
The decrees of the Lord are truth
and all of them just. (R.)

4. They are more to be desired than gold,
than the purest of gold
and sweeter are they than honey,
than honey from the comb. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord,
whoever believes in me will never die.
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

GOSPEL

John 2:13-25

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market." Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings,
and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins,
may take care to forgive our neighbour.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
forever singing your praise.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive the pledge
of things yet hidden in heaven
and are nourished while still on earth
with the Bread that comes from on high,
we humbly entreat you, O Lord,
that what is being brought about in us in
mystery
may come to true completion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

