

Talking Points 'An Interruption to Life as Usual' Delivered 03 06 21
Psalm 33:4-22; Colossians 3:1-17; Proverbs 3:1-12 **John 2:13-22**
(Sermon)

Our focal scripture this morning:

We are traveling our Lenten journey this morning as we encounter Christ and the disciples coming to the temple in Jerusalem.

And this is a uniquely uncomfortable because we are not used to seeing Jesus expressing such anger. Indeed as the team was selecting clipart images to be used for the children's sermon today, we questioned the use of the more frightening images that depicted a truer representation of Christ as described in this moment.

We questioned do we want to show the children an angry Jesus flailing a whip around and chasing merchants from the temple of God?

And we had to settle on the stark fact that that is indeed the Jesus God chose to show in the written word.

This is the image of Jesus He wanted us to see.

Why is Jesus so angry at this moment?

To understand that we have to take a look at what the temple was designed for.

It was designed for the worship of God. The one true God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The God who once delivered the Jews from the hand of their oppressor the Egyptians.

The God who had walked with them every step of the way of their journey and the one who was indeed worthy of worship not because of what He has done, but because of Who He is.

This is the place that was built to worship and study The Ancient of Days, Father/Abba, Jehovah, The Most High God. The list of names

describing the characteristics of God are long, because His greatness, His holiness, and His majesty in and of itself cannot be simply captured in just 'a name'

This one who we struggle to describe in His fullness commanded and deserved a place be set aside for His worship

A place where His people could come and bow down, and worship, and fellowship in His presence

the moneychangers in the temple existed to convert the many currencies in use into the accepted currency for paying the Temple taxes.

They served a purpose, yes, but they had perverted that purpose into something that was completely untoward and unacceptable in the House of the Father

During the high holidays, such as Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, certain priests took advantage of their status by setting up stalls inside the Court of the Gentiles.

It would appear that, on this occasion, the market had spilled over into the holy area.

When Jesus, in parallel passages of three Gospels, declares, “My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a den of robbers” (Luke 19:46; see also Matt 21:13 and Mark 11:17, which echo God’s words from Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11), he was essentially referring to the profane activities that were taking place in this area that was sacred.

As for Jesus' accusation that the merchants had made it "a den of robbers," they had set prices that were charged to those who bought sacrificial animals or who needed to change their money to pay the temple tribute.

This was not only a burden to the many throngs of people who couldn't afford to do so, but it was a distraction, taking the minds of worshippers off of the God they came to worship and commune with.

This is not just a simple story of Jesus getting frustrated or being just unhappy at commerce.

There is something more here. This is a moment of the Holy Jesus reacting to the unholy actions in the one place that should never allow distractions of this sort.

Yes, Jesus was angry. But to focus on his anger misses the entire point, and there is more to this moment than just raw anger of a zealous, passionate for worship Jesus.

The scripture this morning begs us to do as the Proverbs 3: 3 commands "Let love and faithfulness never leave you" in a call to be faithful to the teachings and worship of God. And being faithful enough that we are not a hinderance to others worshipping as well.

After all Jesus surely had to have known that moneychangers were there. He grew up as a faithful Jew going to the temple. He didn't show up this day and say, "Oh Wow! What a surprise! There are animals and moneychangers here. I didn't know this. This is wrong."

The animals and moneychangers had always been there. And this is after all the Son of God, who even in His human form still has the attributes of the divine. He knew, that's how the system worked. It was business as usual for them to be there.

Perhaps Jesus went to the temple that day for that purpose. To throw out and overturn business and systematic oppression as usual.

And in this Lenten journey that we are on, we are reminded that there are times when we have to overturn the own tables in our lives and 'clean house' tossing everything that doesn't fit God's mission for our lives.

Tossing everything that has become business as usual and everything that is a distraction to keep us from getting closer to God.

And Jesus coming to upset the 'usualness' and the 'ordinariness' of our lives is actually a large part of His coming to us is all about.

'The usual' or the ordinary business and business of our lives allows us to push God aside and relegate Him to the small pockets of our lives instead of letting Him fill us up with His presence and His purpose.

We get so stuck in the day to day of earning a living, and just trying to keep our heads above the water of the floods of life that surround us, that we begin to ignore the people around us who are in need.

In the ordinary of the striving of life to attain and to keep, houses, education, health, etc. we begin to become numb to the nudging of the extraordinary God who pulls on our heart and says 'I'm here'.

Getting in the ordinary means that we lose the extraordinary. The deeper issue that our scripture presents to us is what's in the temple of your heart?

Our Colossians scripture in v 15 says to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..." "let" means to "not prevent or forbid; allow." That means there's a choice to be made.

"Let". That's a small word with a big meaning.

There is a choice between the peace of Christ and whatever it is that the world is offering.

We can choose to not let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, our homes, our lives.

If we do, we kind of open ourselves up to Christ coming in and turning over those tables in our heart that we have set up to compete with the presence and the goodness of God.

Our hearts just like the temple were to be the place where God is welcome and can abide.

And it cannot be lost in our current world situation of pandemic restrictions, that have really turned our lives upside down.

In this reading, though we read this scripture each Lenten season, I looked at it with new eyes.

Covid turned The church suddenly from the “church assembled” to the “church deployed”.

Like an army, the Lord of Hosts sent all of His church universal out of the walls of their respective church buildings.

And because of our current experiences, I look at the experience of being sent out of the temple differently.

I wonder, and ask the questions that I often ask of the gospels “did it make a difference to the people in the story?”

Did this make a difference in the lives of the money changers? After all, even in His anger Christ showed incredible restraint. He was human but we must never forget the fact that He was also divine.

If He had wanted to He could have rained down lightening bolts and done much worse to the money changers than fashioning a whip, turning over tables, sending cattle and sheep running and doves flying.

Even in His anger, Christ showed the mercy found in restraint.

The scripture doesn't record the return of the money changers to the temple, and their return to worship, so we don't know if they were made different by this encounter or if it was a moment that they wasted.

What we do know is that Jesus is a transformational God. He wants to transform His church, His body, His hands and feet upon this earth into His vision of a body on fire with the gospel and wanting to follow his call into the world.

This is a pivotal moment as we and other churches weigh our safe return to public gathering. The question before us is “will we be transformed a year after we were removed from the temple worship.

What have we learned in this year about our corporate worship, worship on our phones at work, and sharing the worship experience with those around us.

What is God saying to you?

Jesus is still turning over tables and still driving those things that would distract us from truly knowing Him.

Like the Psalmist in Psalm 33:20-21, we to, “wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. “

We trust in him, rejoicing in faith that sometime this year, in a time of His choosing, we will return to assembled worship. When we do, let us return as people who are vibrant and yearning for the Lord, as a people who are transformed and continue to go beyond the walls of our edifice.

May we be a people who will be able to show the transformation that only Christ can bring.

Amen.

Our challenge today:

This week pray and ask God to show you if there are areas in your life that are competing for His vision of fullness for your life.

If so, let Him turn those tables over and draw you closer to Himself.

Ask Him to show you in His word and in His presence what joy and peace there can be in a closer walk with Him.

Amen.

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

[2 Cor. 13:14](#) - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Go in peace, knowing you are God's beloved child.

PASTORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Meeting – Part Two

Sunday March 14th at 11am by Zoom

Please look for information that will be sent to you on email, WhatsApp, and listen out for calls from your Pastor, Elder or Deacon.

Drive-Thru Communion:

TODAY First Sunday / March 7th from 12noon – 1pm

Church parking lot located at
10308 Liberty Road Randallstown 21133

Please remember to stay masked and remain in your car

Our Psalm 33 reading note verse 4-5 “For the word of the LORD is right and true;

he is faithful in all he does.⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.