

Bennochy church: 11th March 2012

We have all been angry. It is part of being human. It is our response to injustice. It comes from deep within us. Can we really live as human beings if we do not respond to those things that just should not be happening? To be powerless in the face of situations where you wish you could act and do something. Anger sometimes becomes our action, our only response, a response that goes beyond that of our ears as we listen or our eyes as we watch. It comes from the heart. It can be turned inward and repressed, we can lash out verbally, sometimes at those whom we love the most and occasionally our emotions become a physical act, very often of which we regret later. Anger can be very personal, for something that has happened to us or, we witness something happening to others or how other people are acting. The psalmists were great ones for showing their emotions to God. *"Why..."*, *"How long..."* Anger was part of their response to God. Maybe as we worship this morning some come with a sense of anger. Tell God, he can take it!

If there was ever a passage that says something about Jesus being human, this it is. He makes a whip to drive out the animals and overturns the tables of the money-changers. In your minds imagine the scene.

So what is going on? First of all it is the Passover festival, the greatest festival in Judaism and it was customary for all Jews, if possible, to attend Passover each spring, to remember the great

events of the Exodus... So Jerusalem is mobbed! That is the context to the story.

To re-enact the sacrifice that saved God's people all those years ago, the law said that the people had to carry out their own sacrifices at the great temple of Herod. Here is where the problem lay.

To buy their sacrifices they had to use specific temple coinage, so the money lenders were there to exchange the money of the empire to money that was acceptable to buy sacrifices. In other words, there could be no image of the emperor on the coins. The problem was they made a huge profit on this transaction. Even after this you could run into problems, because there were judges, in cahoots with the priestly authorities, who deemed whether you're own or the animal you had bought was acceptable as a sacrifice. They were all in the game!

To this profiteering, but so much more, Jesus responds in anger. There is no "gentle Jesus meek and mild" here. Jesus is not just human, he is a man. I wonder if we have de-masculinised the church...

There are a lot of different things going on here. We tend to focus on this image of Jesus overturning the tables, but the money lending is not the big issue here. Jesus did not die because he overturned some tables! There is something deeper, something far more significant going on.

This is a parable between the physical and the spiritual. Jesus contrasts two very different temples. On the one hand there is the great temple of Herod that took 46 years to build, on the other is Jesus himself.

In response to the question from the Jewish authorities, Jesus speaks of resurrection and a spiritual temple that is his body. If you are going to sacrifice anything, get rid of animals, you don't need them anymore and look to him who is the perfect sacrifice. In spite of the fact there were those who did expect, as part of the end times, a new or transformed temple, the authorities didn't get it and they mocked him. (v20) If congregations today don't like losing their building, these authorities could not see passed the physical building that stood in front of them either.

This is not a story about tables; his anger was directed at their failure to understand what God had been saying for all these centuries through his prophets.

This story is about transformation! From bricks and mortar to 'living stones' (1st Peter) from the physical Christ, through death, to the spiritual temple that is his body. That is what is going on here.

These are powerful words. Later twisted and used in his trial (Matt 26: 61) and to mock him at the cross (See Matt 27: 40)

We need to turn our eyes away from the tables to the transformation offered in Jesus Christ. Amen.