



Gospel Jn 2:13-25

Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.

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.

Reflection by Greg Sunter

The Temple in Jerusalem was (and still is) a powerful symbol of holiness and a symbol of the connection and relationship between God and the Hebrew people. It is often assumed that Jesus' anger was directed at the traders and moneychangers because their business had infringed on and desecrated the temple precinct. But the reality is a bit more complicated. The Temple was the holiest site for sacrifice to God. The tradition dictated that sacrifice made by a priest on the altar was the highest form of worship. The best animal to sacrifice was a healthy, properly formed creature. Rather than walking a lamb all the way from somewhere like Galilee to Jerusalem, the faithful would purchase their sacrifice animal at the Temple itself – thus the presence of the people selling cattle, sheep and doves. However, to further complicate matters, the Temple traders would not accept Roman coins to purchase the sacrificial animals as they bore the image of the deified emperor. Therefore, money changers were required to exchange Roman currency for acceptable coinage – so the money changers were also playing their part in the prayer life of the Temple.

Jesus' outrage is not so much with the traders and the money-changers as with the whole religious practice and hierarchical structure that has developed to a point where the only way a person can pray in a 'valid' way is to purchase an animal and hand it over to a priest who goes behind a screened wall to sacrifice the animal. The only way to seek God's forgiveness and mercy was to 'buy' it at the Temple. *This* was what outraged Jesus. He could not stomach the injustice nor the barriers that had been erected between the people and their God.

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The Living Word

Third Sunday of Lent, Year B

7 March 2021

First Reading Ex 20:1-17

(or shorter form Ex 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17)

The Law was given through Moses.

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 on 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.'

Responsorial Psalm Ps 18:8-11. R. Jn 6:68

(R.) *Lord, you have the words of everlasting 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 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 Cor 1:22-25

We are preaching a crucified Christ, a scandal to many, but to those who have been called, the wisdom of God.

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.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 3:16

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

**God loved the world so much, he gave us his only Son,
that all who believe in him might have eternal life.**

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!