

Worship at Home – Sunday 7th March 2021 – Lent 3

Prepared by Rev Adam Pawley, Rector



A prayer to start (The Collect for the 3rd Sunday of Lent)

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Bible Reading (John 2:13-22) – Jesus clears the temple courts

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!’ ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, ‘What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’

²⁰ They replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Thought

Today’s reading puts an end to the idea of Jesus being meek and mild!

Why did Jesus become so angry?

The Jerusalem Temple was the place where, under the Old Testament Law, animal sacrifices were made to bring about forgiveness with God (Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22). Merchants and money changers however saw their easy business opportunity. Their extortionate prices and allowing only 'Temple brands' to be offered as sacrifices though meant that God's Temple became a place of fraud and corruption rather than a place of worship. Moreover Jewish pilgrims, on arriving at the Temple discovered that – in effect – they had to 'buy' God's forgiveness – as they paid the high exchange rates for the shekel and the expensive prices for the animals.

God's forgiveness however, according to Jesus, must always be **free**. Furthermore the only person who can 'buy' forgiveness for us or 'gift' complete forgiveness to each of us – is Jesus himself – by his death on the cross. On temple sacrifices in due course becoming obsolete, the writer to the Hebrew Christians summed it up like this, "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

There are many injustices in today's world. The rich regularly become richer at the expense of others, the poor often become poorer or must rely on charity and the goodwill of others in order to survive. Jesus' response of 'righteous anger' toward the temple merchants and money changers today is a pointer to us that (1) it's only Jesus (not us or any merchant) who can make forgiveness with God possible and that (2) we should never take advantage of others for personal gain, but rather seek to bless others for the glory of God and the common good of all.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, thank you today for Jesus' free gift of forgiveness. Please forgive me when I live for my own benefit at the expense of others. This Lent, please help me to be a blessing to you and to others. In Jesus Name. **Amen.**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

We hope you are safe and well. Please feel free to contact Rev Adam (01978 760439) or Rev Gareth (07731 827988) if we can help. Thank you.