

Introduction Prayer

With Jesus 'expect' the 'unexpected'.

One moment he is enjoying a wedding at Cana where we saw the turning of water into wine, in abundance! Another time he may be befriending a Samaritan woman, or, tax collectors, or healing someone with leprosy or, as in today's reading, he is yelling and shouting and throwing things and we see, truth and we see, anger.

We have listened to the reading, but let's join the story on video when, everyone witnesses the unexpected!

Video

<https://www.jesusteam.org/watch/life-of-jesus-gospel-of-john.html/cleaning-the-temple/english.html>

GOSH! What a powerful moment!

This is a significant event. There are *only* 3 stories recorded in all 4 gospels: The Feeding the 5,000, The Crucifixion and this One. That tells us something of its importance.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all lead us to the conclusion that the problem was corruption, and *that is* part of the story from John. Traders were not just selling animals; they were cheating other people as they did it. Jesus uses words from Jeremiah "Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of thieves, a market place"?

Jesus walked right to the heart of the Jewish faith, the very place where the presence of God, was said to dwell, a place set apart from everyday use, and He finds those who were *meant to be worshipping*: cheating, lying and stealing.

The temple outer court was for Everyone: Gentiles, Romans, Tourists, Anyone, and the trading was shocking.

Roman currency was used in Jerusalem however, in the temple, the law required payment in shekels the Jewish coins. It became, therefore, a matter of

convenience to have a place where the Roman coin could be exchanged for the Temple ones. Thousands of people came to the great feasts and changing money was a profitable business, one that resulted in fraud and oppression.

People were being charged extortionate prices in the 'bureau de change' of the temple while the priests turned a blind eye. Yet when Jesus healed people in the temple courts their indignation knew no limit.

All this was just too much, for Jesus, instead of a place of prayer and communion with God the temple was full of wickedness.

The pursuit of personal gain, the exploitation of vulnerable people and the misuse of the things of God needed to be overturned and cleansed.

Interestingly, the author of the book (Angry Like Jesus) wrote that "when I began to study Jesus' anger, I was struck by the observation that every time the Bible says Jesus was angry, he's the only one who was. Conversely, every time others were angry, Jesus was not...no one but our Lord was "consumed with zeal" when money changers overtook the temple."

Godly anger lights a flame that fuels people to wake up.

It's an aspect of real love.

Without the salt of Jesus anger, people accept what's unacceptable.

We allow what we shouldn't allow.

We don't make changes, we should make.

We deceive ourselves into thinking that corruption doesn't need to be opposed.

A Franciscan blessing says:

May God bless you with a restless *discomfort*
about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy *anger*
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with enough *foolishness* to believe that **you** really can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

In the Gospel of John,

The conflict in the temple takes on a different meaning. Jesus is '*not just*' acting against corruption; he stops what is going on in order to point to *another holy place* completely. "Destroy this temple," Jesus says, "and in three days, I will raise it up."

Sometimes, what Jesus says, can be baffling and you find yourself thinking "**What**" did anyone say anything about destroying the temple?" People listening were dismissive, "how are you going to rebuild it in three days?"

John writes: The body of Jesus is the new "*holy place.*", "The Word became flesh, and lived among us,".

The temple was the meeting place between the God of Israel and God's people. It was the place where humanity and the divine met. With the coming of Jesus that all changed: **Jesus himself is the Temple of God, the place now, the one now, where Humanity and Divinity meet.**

John places all this at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, whereas the others place it at the end. It seems that John overrules the timeline for these more important and highly significant considerations.

Marjorie Dobson writes:

Whip in hand and uncharacteristically angry, Jesus swept through the temple courtyard.

Tables were smashed, money scattered; pigeons found freedom in flight and sacrificial animals fled to safety.

His voice boomed across the rapidly emptying space – 'this is desecration!

How can strangers worship here in a place over-run with commerce and greed?

My Father's house is for prayer, not for profit!

How dare you do this to it?’

And traders huddled in corners and tried to keep their eyes on their vanishing possessions.

And priests flocked to witness the devastation and to gather in consultation and to plot their revenge.

And strangers came out of the shadows to wonder at the nerve of this man who had said, exactly what they wanted to hear, but so powerfully that he was bound to create new enemies for himself.

And as Jesus turned to leave, the accused robbers spat at his departure; the opportunists gathered all the loot they could and disappeared into the shadows; and the self-righteous Jewish believers could only ask for proof of authority for his actions.

They didn't like his answer. It was completely unrealistic. But in the end, it proved to be true, although not in the way they were expecting.

Three days they had succeeded in destroying him, but in three days he was back.

Indestructible!

In the Corinthians reading:

There is so much paradox in the cross, it was the last place you would expect to find God's love and power. The Jews demanded signs and a political saviour who would remove Roman rule.

The Greeks sought wisdom and elaborate philosophical systems.

But the shameful crucifixion, shattered human expectations, it was offensive to Jewish feelings and senseless to Gentile intelligence. Who would have thought that, saving grace would be like this? Tables are turned again, what looks like defeat is turned into victory and failure into success.

‘The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God’.

The love of Jesus sometimes means purifying the temple..... other times it means dying on a cross.

He is just the master of the unexpected.

Always 'expect' the 'unexpected'.