

## **Sermon: March 4, 2018**

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### **John 2:13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Video (to 3:18): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGy1wdGKX2k>

On Tuesday I was in Ottawa at Parliament for the reading of the 2018 Budget. For several days I had been mulling over in my mind the reading for this week, so when I arrived at the Parliament buildings and began walking up several stone steps to the massive buildings that house the most powerful in our Nation, I couldn't help but think about Jesus going to the temple...a vast place of honour created with stone steps and pillars where the religious powers at the time could be found. It was a place where people would gather for praise and Thanksgiving,

for confession and for the festivals by which the Jewish people remembered the covenant God made with them. But the purpose of the Temple became blurred when Caiaphas, the High Priest during Jesus time moved money changing and the selling of animals for sacrifice from the outskirts of town on the Mount of Olives, the same place that Jesus was staying with Mary and Martha, to the Temple courts. During the time of Passover, when Jews came from all over they would head to the Temple and while they were there they would have to change their foreign money into Temple money. And the moneychangers were often unscrupulous merchants who would charge as much as they could squeeze out of these people. And once the visitors had their money exchanged they then would pay the annual temple tax that all Jewish men over the age of 20 were expected to pay annually for the maintenance of the Temple. And with this Temple money, they would buy properly inspected animals for sacrifice, where once again they were overcharged and the High Priest would enjoy a cut of the profits.

Foreign exchange, profits, money, unscrupulous businesses, taxes...perhaps it wasn't just the Parliament steps that reminded me of the Temple of Jerusalem? Jesus turned the tables and said enough is enough...the Temple is not a marketplace, meant to line the pockets of merchants and the temple leaders. It was against this abomination that he took action...even violent action making a whip out of ropes to drive out the animals and overturning the money tables. "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market."

Yes Jesus was angry because the Temple was not being used as a universal place of pilgrimage, but also because it was disgracing God... but more particularly it was in the way in which it was being disgraced that would have distressed Jesus.

The Temple housed the highest authorities of the church and in this place where Religious power dominated they failed to recognize that they were taking advantage of God's people...some of who were marginalized and poor....the Religious were failing to care for the very people Jesus had come to teach were beloved and deserving of protection, fairness and equality.

The story of an angry Jesus is one that often frightened me. It was hard for me to imagine Jesus making a whip...using it and being so angry that he flipped tables on un-expecting merchants...but I'm not sure being afraid of Jesus is what I need to be. I think this story about Jesus says that sometimes it is okay to be angry...especially when others are being taking advantage of unfairly.

So while I was at Parliament I sat and listened to a question period, where many of the opposition MP's were able to inquire about concerns they had. What I experienced was a lot of angry put downs and attacks at those who held seats in the current majority party. Coming away from there, left a really bad taste in my mouth. Regardless of which party someone is with, I can see no reason for the disrespect of a fellow MP. We live in world where we are trying to teach our young people that bullying is never an option, yet here in Our House of Commons this seems to be a common tactic.

The more I thought about what I had witnessed in Parliament, the more I thought about the anger that I saw...and realized that though the tactics of attack and degradation against their colleagues is unacceptable behaviour, part of the job of an MP is to be angry.

Our MP's are the people's government representatives, and regardless of which party one comes from they have a duty to represent their constituents. If

an MP believes that the current government is failing to look after the needs of their constituents, regardless of the party they belong to they have every right to be angry...in fact they should be angry. Anger has its place. Anger can motivate individuals to do things to create change. And that is change that can take care of God's people and God's creation in ways that are fair and equitable, in ways that will protect them.

In the U.S., anger has motivated several young people, to insist that changes be made in laws for the sake of themselves and others. Following the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida and the death of 17 people...many youth said enough is enough. Not one more person should die in a school shooting...no-one should be afraid to go to school to receive an education. Since that time there have been protests across the country. Youth climbed the steps of state buildings because they were angry and demanded that their voices be heard. There have been discussions and debates about Gun Laws in America, and some small changes have happened. Two of the top gun retailers have created more strict policies around gun sales. Several major companies have severed ties with the National Rifle Association; an organization that has fought against gun control and some state lawmakers are proposing stricter gun control legislation. There is much more that needs to be done Stateside to protect people from gun violence, but hopefully along with the youth, some of their political representatives will remain angry and effect change.

Jesus was angry at the way the temple was being used to take advantage of people and it is this same sort of righteous anger that can motivate us. Anger that is used to fight against injustice and oppression can be used to right wrongs. It can

be used to drive us to ensure that we support political representatives who will take care of the marginalized and those in need. There is a saying on a bumper sticker that reads, "If you are not appalled, you haven't been paying attention." We Christians are called to pay attention. What makes you angry? What wrongs do you want righted? What tables will you turn this week? Jesus was passionate about creating justice in the Jerusalem Temple...what will you do to create justice in God's holy temple of creation?

May the Holy Spirit guide you this week to notice and make change.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.