

Here's how today's reading starts: **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.**

- This is towards the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
- He's just done his first sign: turning water into wine
- At the wedding at Cana
- Now he is in Jerusalem near the time of the Passover
- And he goes to the temple.
- In the temple he finds people selling animals –
- Selling animals which will be *sacrificed*
- As part of the *temple ritual*.
- And he sees the money changers at their tables –
- Evidently changing money into smaller denominations
- And changing money into what can be used *in the temple*.

Let's pay attention to the details of what happens next: **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 market-place!'**

- Jesus first action: he makes a whip of cords:
- This is an action involving deliberation; it takes time.
- Then he drives them all out of the temple.
- In our translation it sounds like it's just the animals he drives out
- But it seems to me other translations are closer to the Greek
- When they include *the people*
- So the RSV: **And making a whip of cords he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple.**
- He then pours out the coins of the money changers
- And overturns their tables

- And he gives stern commands to those selling doves
- To remove themselves and the birds
- And to stop making what he calls his Father's house
- Into a market place.

Notice what Jesus calls the temple: his Father's house.

- Sometimes we can get the idea
- That Jesus was opposed to the temple:
- That he was against the sacrificial system; the priesthood.
- But think about what the Gospels reveal:
- When he was an infant Jesus' own parents
- Made the correct sacrifices for him.
- When he was a boy his parents found him in the temple
- And even then he called the temple his Father's house.
- And in today's reading Jesus is moved to action
- When he sees the temple being misused, profaned.
- So: Jesus actions are the fitting response
- To the profanation of the temple.
- What's more, they are evidently the fulfillment
- Of one of the Messianic prophecies:
- Zechariah gives a description of what would accompany
- The advent of the Christ: **And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.** Zechariah 14:21

But let's pause here: whatever Jesus' words and actions

- May tell us of his Messianic status and his love for the temple
- For many Christians Jesus actions at the temple are *disturbing*:
- The violence is perhaps out of keeping with our mental picture
- Of who Jesus is and what he would do.
- But readings like today can save us from idolatry,
- From having a God that we have made in our own image.
- The text reveals to us who Jesus actually is
- And what Jesus actually does:

- He drives, with power, out all that would profane the holy.

Think about what this means for us:

- We have not kept the Ten Commandments
- We have not fulfilled them with true love for God
- And heartfelt love for others: we need to be cleansed from sin:
- We need what is unholy in our lives overturned driven out.
- And we, who are the temple of the Lord
- Have one who can do for us what we cannot do ourselves:
- Who can cleanse us from all sin and unrighteousness.

Let's go back to the text

- We read: **[Jesus] disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'**
- This is a quote from Psalm 69: So the disciples start the process
- Of remembering the Scriptures -
- What we would call the Old Testament -
- *As being about Christ; we'll come back to this*

Now, Jesus, when he comes to the temple in John's Gospel,

- Is unknown to the authorities in Jerusalem:
- They see a young adult male of passionate conviction
- Acting with vehemence and moral clarity
- In the realm where they think *they* are in charge
- And so they have a question: **The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?'**
- This language is the same as the Epistle for today:
- While the Greek mindset is one of worldly wisdom
- The Jewish mindset is one of demanding miraculous signs
- From those who would do prophetic actions -
- Especially prophetic actions in the temple.

But Jesus directs them to a sign, to the great sign

- That confounds human expectations
- About what God's power should look like: **Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'**
- As is often the case in John's Gospel
- Those speaking with Jesus misunderstand him: **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.**
- Jesus was speaking about what would happen
- In the true and lasting temple: his body
- He was talking about his cross, his death, his resurrection

The last verse of our reading has a detail

- That might be easy to overlook. Listen: **After [Jesus] 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.**
- That they would remember what Jesus has said,
- And believed, that is understandable. But what about
- Believing *the scripture*? Didn't they already believe?
- The change: they believed that the Scriptures were *about Jesus*
- This is what we get also in Luke with the risen Jesus
- On the road to Emmaus: **Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.**
- Think, for example, about Noah's Ark, and how 1 Peter treats it:
- *To teach about Christian baptism...*

At the heart of Scripture is Christ

- And the great sign of his death on the cross
- To take away our sin, and to have authority to cleanse us
- From all that make us unfit for life with God.
- So, let us welcome Jesus, as we confess our sins
- And trust in the mercy of the Father. In Jesus' name.