

Do You Have the Time?
Time to Act
John 2:12-22
Third Sunday of Lent (B)
March 4, 2018
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John 2:12-22 (NRSV)

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² 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.

Last week, I noted that not all of us keep our calendars in our phones. Believe me, our wall calendar is still the master planning device in our home.

But I'm wondering: How many of us use social media? Facebook? Twitter? Even if it's just your kids and grandkids who do the snapchat "thing" don't you pick up the phone to share news and get information from watching TV? See you've heard about the President's twitters.

So, even though we're using a cell phone as our visual aid, we don't have to have one to get caught up in heated discussions about politics, religion, gun-control or freedom of speech. And you can't just turn off this message!

And, even if you don't use social media, don't we get "upset" about things we see in the news?

Today's reading, from the gospel of John, has Jesus coming to Jerusalem for Passover. Since Jesus came down from the mountain of the Transfiguration he's been "on his way" to Jerusalem.

We have the benefit of knowing now, what was probably on his mind then: He was coming closer to his crucifixion.

That in itself had to have been a weighty burden!

THEN, he got to the temple and found people selling sheep and doves, with the authority's permission, instead all of them preparing for Passover.

Have you ever read this passage (it comes up *every Lent*) and were thrown off by Jesus' behavior?

The typically sedate, seemingly in control Jesus that we're accustomed to, is aggressive!

With good reason, don't YOU think?

There was dishonest money-changing and the Temple had become a market. This was not something that should have been going on, much less during the Passover.

When Jesus discovered what was happening, he was upset and angry.

He drove the animals out of the temple.

He dumped the moneychanger's coins everywhere!

Jesus yelled at the people who had turned his "Fathers' house into a marketplace!"

While, in similar circumstances, Jesus would have used this as a teaching opportunity or a chance to speak out against those in the wrong, THIS TIME, Jesus takes action first.

This passage is about ACTION.

We can pick up the phone or jot an email or make a Facebook post to comment about the sorry state of "fill-in-the-blank..."

We can complain during fellowship time or in the parking lot about the horrors of some world event....

We can even pray about the injustice of something, a community issue, or the status of our families and neighborhoods. We can.

But sometimes we have to actually DO something about the things we're complaining about.

We can get all fluffed up in outrage **but until** we DO something, until we ACT, we are just as complicit as the politicians, AND the priests and Pharisees that had watched the Temple be desecrated by moneychangers.

We can see why Jesus got upset.

He was trying to enter a place of worship for a holy time but found himself in the midst of the basic sin of idolatry.

It would be easy for us to read this story, put ourselves in Jesus' shoes, and wholeheartedly side with him.

WE COULD be outraged and point out the wrongdoings of those in the temple and to cry out for what we believe is right in the name of God.

It would be easy for us to pat ourselves on the back and rejoice that, 2,000 years later, we speak out about doing the right thing in the church.

But here is the tricky part of this story:

The people that Jesus was angry with **were** people of faith, not politicians wanting to wage war.

The moneychangers were encouraged by the temple authorities!

The ones who had studied God's words and actively participated in their church were members of a community of faith...just like we all are members of this church.

So here's a challenging question for all of us:

How different are we really from the people in the temple and what would Jesus say if he came in here today?

My study time this week brought me Moses.

Before the exodus, as Moses was being called, BY GOD, to return to Egypt and free God's people, remember... Moses came up with all kinds of excuses NOT to. He even said, TO GOD, "can't you send someone else?"

Do we ever hesitate to respond or act because we don't feel that we have the skills needed? Huh. We're kinda like one of God's best servants: Moses.

So remember: God provided Aaron to go along with Moses and speak for him, when Moses didn't feel like he could. God's plan works.

Do we ever hesitate to respond or act because we don't want to give up the good things we enjoy? Huh. Remember Jesus...gave up EVERYTHING.

Regardless of our shortcomings God is always there, ready and waiting for us to respond and act.

Today's Scripture verses tell us a lot about the nature of who we are as human beings and who we are as "usually" well-intentioned church people.

It is easy for us to settle into the comfort of our routines and forget that sometimes God is calling us to do something different.

Jesus wasn't just upsetting the moneychangers, he was pointedly, VERY outspoken for the "faithful" people to take notice!

They had moved away from God's call to worship.

They'd fallen away from caring for the less fortunate; from having compassion and from doing justice.

The agendas of self-interest and indifference had created an environment of idolatry!

Whoa! That's one of the big 10!

So, Jesus confronts the wrong-doing and clears the Temple.

Dear Ones, as we continue the difficult task of examining ourselves during this Season of Lent, let's NOT get caught up in talkin' the talk instead of walkin' the walk!

It's easy to gripe about a law or politician or activity in society.

But how many of us will really do something about it?

The personal comfort and satisfaction and our closed doors of 2018 are no less idolatry than when Jesus tipped over the tables.
And worse than the sin of idolatry, is when we deny the idolatry!

It harms, NOT ONLY ourselves, but others.

As we've come through these first couple of weeks of Lent we've talked about taking charge and being deliberate about disciplines that bring us closer to God. And, as we've come closer, we've realized that we need to "give up" the things that distract us from God's purpose and God's methods.

Now, we've got to act.

We've got to leave the comfortable and easy and return to the path where God wants us to be.

Our faith has to be a radical decision to give up the OLD to follow NOT just the teaching of Jesus but also, when necessary, to ACT like Jesus. As **followers of Jesus Christ**, we're called to notice and care about AND ACT ON BEHALF of the marginalized; those folks on the edges...the homeless or hungry; the widow and the orphan, prisoners, the ill, the elderly and children (and everyone in between!)

Don't let the "issues" (that are really people) be so "every day" that we become complacent.

School shootings and murders; homeless begging; suicide, sex-trafficking, elder-abuse...the list is so long...

But, if we believe **and we should**...if we believe that we are God's Temple then we need to begin to overturn the tables of what's wrong in our world.

And to be clear - this isn't when I'm going to throw out a list of "whatcha wanna do."

I'd be thrilled to sit down and talk with you (I'd say Ruth Richey and the Outreach team would, too)...about your ideas; about the ways WE CAN (not just talk) responding to the needs of others and be in defiance of idolatrous evil in the world. No blame game stuff; real action. Because immorality has eroded our

families; consequences don't happen; and the values of our community focus on self...

Let's take the time and effort to turn over a few tables!
That means following through with our deliberate changes of Lent.
And it will make real changes in the world.
It is time to ACT!

Thanks be to God!
Amen!