

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Perhaps you are a little surprised. Even Jesus can get angry.

Holding a whip of chords, turning tables and with a loud exclamation of 'get out', we have heard quite vividly today about a heated exchange between our Lord and the temple authorities. Who would not be angry if they witnessed what Jesus saw?

Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus had just performed the miracle in Cana; changing water into wine. Mary, knowing the true nature of her Son, exclaimed, 'Listen to him',

And in last week's Gospel, Jesus spoke to the crowds quite openly about his imminent rejection. They were shocked. Peter even rebuked him for being so open.

We have in today's gospel and these other examples, signs. Important signs, pointing to who Jesus is.

In today's Gospel, Jesus arrives into Jerusalem and attends the temple, just like everyone else. It was Passover, the most important feast of the year. He had made the journey many times before.

The temple life of then is hard for us to relate to today. In fact, it is not relatable at all to the holiness and serenity that we would normally attribute to this beautiful cathedral. It was bustling and chaotic. It would have been very loud, smelly (burning animal flesh cannot be pleasant) and - very corrupt.

In line with Jewish ritual of old, the sale and subsequent sacrifice of animals was central. In addition, money changers exchanged Roman coins for the special temple coins so that the visitors could pay the temple tax. The money changers, of course, would have ensured that a nice little chunk of profit was made on the side. None of this was outside the ordinary.

But this time, when Jesus arrived, change had arrived. Not being one to shy away from making a point, Jesus comes to scatter what he witnesses to. Ungodly practice. They are not glorifying God.

Payment for sacrifices and temple taxes were a necessity in order that one might gain right judgement and favour. The cost would have been extortionate to the poor and the oppressed. It is no wonder Jesus was angry. How could we blame him? He saw what God saw: exploitation - profiting out of them so that they may be worthy and entitled to receive God's blessing. How, Jesus must have thought, could anyone restrict God?

The temple had become a marketplace, or as the synoptic Gospels tell us 'a den of robbers'. The temple had switched from a dwelling place of God to a place of human power and greed.

I really enjoy the words of the Taize chant, 'See I am here' says the Lord. 'See I make all things new'.

Jesus the liberator had come to bring hope and bring that change. He came to bring down the proud and the stubborn of heart. The sacrificial practice and the temple taxes were not ways that God wanted to relate to his people. It was to be through Jesus, the Messiah.

After table flipping and casting out of the animals, the temple authorities asked, rather shocked: 'what sign can you show us for doing this?'

His response: 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up'.

His words outraged them. The temple was the centre of the life. His words were blasphemy. But they were only outraged - because they did not understand. We should wonder, why did Jesus use this slightly cryptic answer? Was it a test? Were the authorities too focussed on human and not divine things? Were their hearts empty?

Jesus is likely challenging them. To truly see, you have to want to know the truth. They have to break free and cleanse themselves from corruption.

'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up'.

Jesus was not talking about the physical temple's destruction. He was talking of the temple of his body. His body, that after being destroyed, would rise on the third day. Jesus came not to affirm the old ways; he came and was the replacement of the temple. It was his temple, where the glory of God had chosen to make His dwelling. He was the incarnate Son, God's own delight. And now God was giving his Son to us.

Holy Week is drawing ever nearer. We are drawing ever closer to the fulfilment of these words of Jesus and his temple, being led to his passion and death. Jesus, the new temple, **seemingly** being destroyed by evil. Not a chance.

Jesus could not be contained. The divine cannot be contained by any physical matter. On the third day he arose in glorious Resurrection.

But for now, we are continuing our Lenten journey. In Lent especially, we are invited to enter a cycle of renewal, refocus, and cleansing. The last year has been tough for us all, but particularly difficult for many. We all need to attend to ourselves in body, mind and spirit.

Each of us is a temple. A temple made by God. A dwelling place for Jesus.

There are many ways that we can renew, re-focus and cleanse our bodily temple. Not only does it unburden us from the very present troubles and stresses that are no doubt

rife at the moment, but it also helps us to come closer to our Lord, with a heart of ever greater desire.

As an Ordinand training in a monastic tradition, it's probably unsurprising that my first thought is to suggest that we look to the psalms for help. Find a moment. Sit in peace. Psalm 19 is a gem, and it was sung so beautifully by our choir this morning. If you get a chance give it another read. A little extract - 'the law of the lord is perfect, reviving the soul' [...] 'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O lord, My strength and my redeemer.'

Renewal, refocus and cleansing is always to, to be found at the communion table of the Lord where we will shortly gather. We are gathered both physically and virtually in this place, where we can lose ourselves in the great mystery of that sacrificial love. The last and final sacrifice of Jesus, the lamb.

Through Lent, and through our entire life, we need only ever desire to draw Jesus into our own temple, with our whole heart. Because he had a heart only for us too. God asks nothing more.

Amen.