

**“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”**

What got you angry this week?

Did anything get you angry enough to yell at someone, tip over the furniture or throw something?

We don't normally associate that kind of behaviour with Jesus - “gentle Jesus meek and mild”. Well today we meet an angry fired up Jesus. Jesus with smoke coming out of his nostrils, angry enough to throw things and yell at people and get the whip out! And it happened in Church, during the holiest week of the Jewish calendar, the Passover!

Jesus wasn't on the church cleaning roster but when he saw what was going on he got into some serious church cleaning of his own! Jesus wasn't angry because someone forgot to put the flowers on the altar or he didn't like the hymns or the sermon was too long or someone was sitting in his favourite pew. He became angry when he saw **“men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money”** in the temple courtyard. The Jesus whom we normally picture as the good shepherd with a lamb over his shoulder makes a whip and starts driving out the sheep and other animals, opening the bird cages, tipping over tables and throwing money around. **“Get these out of here”**, he yells at those who were selling them. **“How dare you turn my Father's house into a market”**.

Some Christians have a problem with Jesus getting angry. Confirmation children often say Jesus sinned when he got angry in the temple! But anger in itself is not a sin. The Bible says “Be angry but do not sin”. Anger in itself is not wrong. We get angry over what is really important to us. The trouble is that what is so important to us and makes us angry is not always what is important to God. We often get angry over minor things or for selfish reasons. And in our anger we often make things worse, we end up sinning ourselves!

Jesus was angry. But his concern was for others and their connection with his Father. His concern was that people come to God, and come to God through him. He was justifiably angry that the temple had been turned into a market-place, the poor were being ripped off, especially the pilgrims who came long distances and had no choice but to buy their animal to sacrifice on site and exchange their money for temple money at exorbitant foreign exchange rates. The only thing missing was the ATM machine and credit card facility. Someone estimated the sacrificial business was worth \$170m US in today's terms! The temple was supposed to be a place to pray and come close to God and find forgiveness and peace with him, but it was turning out anything but that. Jesus takes action to remove the wrong. He didn't just say “what a pity”, he did something. He told them off, let the animals free and tipped over the money tables and drove the operators out.

This wasn't the only time he got angry. He was angry with Peter when Peter wanted to prevent him from giving his life on the cross. He became angry when adults wanted to prevent children from coming to him and his kingdom. He became angry at hypocrisy and self righteousness and

wherever people thought they could get to God without repentance and forgiveness. He got angry when man made rules made it harder to get to God.

Well how did people react to the angry Jesus? The disciples remembered Psalm 69 **“Zeal for your house will consume me”** - they saw a prophecy being fulfilled by Jesus’ actions. They saw him as the Messiah coming with a passion for God’s will, a passion that would lead to his death. The Jews however demanded to know by what; right Jesus could upset things the way he did, to which Jesus replied - **“Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days”** They thought he was referring to the building. He was talking about his body. He called himself the temple, the place to meet God. He predicted he would be killed and would rise to life opening up the way to God for all people. In their anger they did crucify Jesus. He made them angry! But three days later he kicked open the door of the tomb, he was raised to life. Then the disciples remembered what he had said here in the Temple.

Jesus came to take God’s anger against all sins in his own body on the cross on Good Friday. On the cross Jesus made the only sacrifice necessary for your sin and paid what was needed. On the cross Jesus opened the way to God for you. We come to God and worship him through Jesus. The animals were chased out because they were no longer needed. The money changers were thrown out because you can’t buy God’s forgiveness. The temple is no longer “the” place to meet God and find peace with him. Herod’s Temple was destroyed in 70AD, but you can meet God in Jesus anywhere, anytime, today.

What gets you angry?

With Jesus we should get angry when we see people being treated badly, injustice or neglect done to the poor, the sick, the aged, the vulnerable. We should get angry when we hear of corruption among those who are supposed to be leaders. We should get angry that so many people starve to death unnecessarily around the world. We should be angry at hypocrisy as Jesus was. We should be angry at pettiness. We should be angry at abuse of any kind in the church. But most of all we should be angry when people are hindered from coming to God, and hindered from coming to him by us, the church. We should be angry whenever the church gives the impression that the sacrifices we make in life are what makes us acceptable to God. Whenever Jesus and his cross and forgiveness are obscured and other things are put in the way of people coming to God through Jesus. St Paul got angry with congregations where their lifestyles did not match their claim to be Christian, or where false teachers were saying you had to do this and this in addition to believing in Jesus to be saved. Martin Luther got angry at the time of the Reformation when the church sold forgiveness to people for money. What hinders people from hearing and believing in Jesus Christ and his free forgiveness today? Whatever it is it ought to make us angry.

What would Jesus get angry about in the church today? What would he want to tip over and upset and speak out against? What in your life would anger Jesus? What in your life prevents you from receiving his grace with full faith, or prevents others from coming to faith? Would he be angry that we have lost our passion for sharing the Good News of God and other things have got our interest? If we are passionate about anything, if anything ought to arouse strong feeling in us it ought to be Christ’s desire to bring people into a right relationship with God.

Thank God for the angry church cleaning Jesus. God grant that we may have his zeal, his passion and even his anger for the things that are most important to God. God grant that in our anger we don’t hinder people from coming to God but remove any obstacle and help them find his forgiveness, love and peace in Jesus the temple of God in person.