

LENT 3

YEAR B

EXODUS 20:1-17

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25

JOHN 2:13-22

MARCH 3, 4, 2018

We are making our way toward our goals for the National Youth Gathering which is to be held the last week of June. As we prepare for the trip we are also doing things to raise money. Some of those fundraising activities take place within the walls of the church and some will take place away from here. No matter where we do fund raising you will be asked to support this trip. Our youth group is not the only group doing fundraising. We will soon focus on raising money for our building project and we will have "Pies and Palms" at the end of this month. "Pies and Palms" supports our Vacation Bible School ministry. You may be thinking that the church's ministry is about raising money. If we are not raising money we are talking about money. If that isn't enough the church has all kinds of fundraisers and the people are asked to support this project or that project. Our kids ask for money. They have bake sales and they seek other ways to raise money for the various activities planned. Into all this activity come the words and the actions of our Lord.

John 2:14-17 In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making 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. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

My hope and prayer is that our financial needs and goals are not a distraction to why we are really here. The church of Jesus Christ is always a house of prayer and worship. It is a place where people come to have fellowship with God and with other Christians. We come to the church when there are services and Bible studies because we want a closer and more intimate relationship with God. We come here to be cared for and cared about.

The same was true with people in the time of our Lord in Temple in Jerusalem. People were coming for the festival of Unleavened Bread and the holy day of

Passover. They were coming to the Temple because they wanted to come closer to the Lord their God. They wanted to offer the right sacrifice. They wanted to have the right burnt offering and they needed to have the Temple currency for their offering because the Roman or Greek currency could not be used for the Temple offering. Nothing with the image of a person or thing could be brought into the Temple because of the teaching of the Ten Commandments. Only the Temple currency could be placed in the Temple offering. There was nothing wrong with the Temple merchants offering a service. It was even OK to make a profit for a service rendered. What then was the problem? Why was Jesus so angry that he threw the money changers out and overturned their tables?

Jesus went into the outer part of the Temple. The outer part of the Temple was the court of the Gentiles. There were several parts of the Temple. One part reserved for the men and another for women and children. Jesus was in the court of the Gentiles. Gentiles were not permitted to come further into the Temple. In the outer court Jesus found the people selling cattle, sheep and doves. He saw the money changers at their tables. They were providing a service but they were taking advantage of those coming from a distance. They were taking advantage of those that were required to be there because they lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem. How were they taking advantage?

Deuteronomy 15:7, 8 **If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. ⁸You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.**

Our Lord Jesus was angry for his people. The temple had become a place where the people of God were commanded to go; but where access to God was a scam. Here is the likely the cost of worship to the common person of Christ's day. The Temple tax might be two days wages. The moneychanger's fee for providing the service might be one day's wages. Someone had to check the cattle, sheep and doves to make sure they met the requirements for the sacrifice. That person might charge a half of a day's wages. The sacrifice itself would cost two day's wages if you bought one pair of

doves outside the temple and 40 day's wages if you bought them inside the Temple. You could buy the doves outside but they were subject to the inspector on the inside of the Temple. In today's economy, a day at the temple could cost about \$3,000—\$4,000 dollars and any Jew within 15 miles of the temple was required to attend at least one of the three major festivals each year. The Roman historian, Josephus, wrote that Passover visitors could number as many as two and a quarter million. This would put revenues from such gatherings at hundreds of millions of dollars according to our 21st century money. Could it be that Jesus was angry because of the burden placed on God's people coming to the Temple? No wonder Jesus was angry and zeal was consuming him. Jesus chased these merchants and moneychangers from the temple!

How are we different from what Jesus found in the Temple? Would our Lord come into Our Savior's and start tearing things up? The only way our Lord becomes angry is when we are not loving and caring for our neighbors. The Lord Jesus wants justice for all of God's children. Our Lord wants us to have compassion for the poor and the needy. He wants us to love those that others do not love. Our Lord does not want us to be lukewarm in our ministry and in our teaching and preaching. We are to be on fire for the Lord in all that we do. We are bold in our proclamation and in our ministry. I don't think that money was the issue in the Temple that day. The issue was a practice that was turning the house of prayer into a market place. It was to be a house of prayer for all people. All were to be welcome in the house of God. Buying and selling the Gentile court might have meant Gentiles could not gather because there was no place for them.

You and I walk by faith. We trust in the protection and guidance of our Lord. When others are in need we reach out to them. When someone is crying we embrace them. We do the work our Lord calls us to.

In first century Israel people within 15 miles of Jerusalem were required to attend at least one of the festivals. They were forced to worship in a certain way and give a certain amount. You and I are free to attend services or not attend. You are free to

worship the Lord or not. It is your choice. If we walk in faith we know whom we serve and we know the one that cares for us. We listen to the Lord Jesus when he says this is a house of prayer and of worship. It is a house that cares for those in need. It is a house of compassion. We support the ministry because it is blessed by God and it is part of God's blessing to us. We support this ministry with our tithe and our offering because it is what our Lord directed us to do. It is our response to the blessings of our Lord. God provided life for you and me. Jesus shed his blood on the cross that you and I would have life and have it abundantly. Our commitment to the Lord's ministry is because our Lord first loved us. We thank God in and through our giving. We thank God for the blessing of people that come to share this ministry with us. We thank God for making us one body of Christ. AMEN