

Bargain Culture

13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." [a] 18 The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." John 2:13-19

Angry Jesus. This scene stands in such stark contrast to everything else we have experienced as to the nature of Jesus. Up to this point, Jesus has proven himself loving, kind, miraculous, powerful and infinitely patient, but here we experience the Jesus who has had enough; the Jesus filled with righteous anger. It's interesting that it took the activity in the temple to push Jesus past the breaking point. What is the lesson here for us?

It would have been normal for animals intended for sacrifice to have been bought and sold in the temple courts, but something else was happening here. Commerce and bargaining had become "the thing" rather than preparation and worship. The temple, the place where God dwelt in the "Holy of Holies" had been meant to be the crowning glory of the "city on a hill", a shining example of devotion between Jehovah and His people, but here we find a strong departure from that gleaming example. The temple had become just another place; sacrifice and sacrificial animals had become just another hoop to be jumped through... to the point that it was a place of haggling, and striking of bargains, of cheating and greed. The holy place had become common.

Experts tell us that it was not just that things were being sold in the temple, but that people were being taken advantage of. Here the son of the God who rewarded Abraham for his outstanding hospitality and devotion, the God who had destroyed cities that had become corrupted

by sin and violence, saw the ugliness of sin and corruption right in the temple courts. The Gospel of Matthew quotes Jesus saying "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a 'den of robbers'" (Mt 21:13).

What have we made worship? What has God's church become? Are we any different than those money changers? Do we strike bargains with God in the temple? Bargains like "If worship leaves me feeling full of the spirit then I will _____"; or "If I agree with the leadership of the church then I will _____". Sound familiar?

How about our own temples, how do we as the walking, talking Temples of God, interact with the Holy? How do we encounter His presence? Do we bargain for the things we want and need? "God if you will just give me x,y, or z, then I promise to use it to serve you. If Jesus was standing before our temples, would we be bound for a righteous cleansing? Meister Eckhart describes such a cleansing :

"Light and darkness cannot exist side by side. God Himself is the truth. When he enters the temple, he drives out ignorance and darkness and reveals himself in light and truth. Then, when the truth is known, merchants must depart for truth wants no merchandising."

Truth and light cannot be bargained for. Deals cannot be struck with God. Holiness cannot be haggled over. Today, let us examine our temple and begin the holy cleansing ourselves.

Prayer: Holy God you are patient, but not endlessly so. You can be offended. Forgive us Lord if you find offense with our temples and guide us to holiness anew. Amen.