

Lent Devotional March 12, 2019

SCRIPTURE

John 2:13-22

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In 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." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After 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.

DEVOTIONAL

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Sometimes it's easy to trash the moneychangers. They make an easy target. But did they really just set up shop with the intention of making a quick buck selling cattle, sheep, and doves? It was once explained to me that the whole apparatus for the sale of animals at the Temple was set up for the sake of removing a burden from travelers—people coming to worship at the Temple would not need to bring their own animals for sacrifice but could purchase an animal right there. The impetus was to make the process more convenient, more accessible. But how quickly convenience can lead to something else. It appears that in this passage, that's exactly what had happened. Instead of offering a service—instead of constituting a reasonable means of obtaining sacrifices—the system had turned into an opportunity for exploitation of the vulnerable traveler, those who lacked their own livestock, or those otherwise not already plugged into the system.

During this Lenten season, may we reflect on what we have done for the sake of convenience and discern whether that convenience has turned into something else—and if it has, let us repent . . . and let the Lord overturn the tables in our hearts and rebuild.

PRAYER

Holy God, guide our spirits to discern where we have become too comfortable and where that comfort has turned to the sin of complacency. Help us ever to keep our focus on worshiping you in truth and in joy. In the name of Christ Jesus, we pray. Amen.