

'LOVE WITH TRUST AND WITH PASSION AND ENERGY AND ZEAL'

3rd Sunday Lent – HOMILY 4 MARCH 2018

BACKGROUND

WHEN WE HEAR THE FAMILIAR STORY OF JESUS CLEANSING THE TEMPLE, WHAT DO WE IMAGINE?

It seems to jar our image of Jesus as healer.

It grabs our attention.

Some people in history have quoted it to justify their wish to be violent.

They use it as an excuse to do what they want to do.

REFLECTING ON THE BACKGROUND

Let us reflect on the background of the passage today.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the cleansing is much later in the Gospel.

It is a key passage, for those authorities wishing to find a reason to condemn Jesus.

However, in John's Gospel, the key passage later in the Gospel,

is the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Late in the ministry of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus is a threat to the same authorities.

John can keep the cleansing passage in the normal position of the other Gospels,

or he can delete it, or he can move it.

By the time of the writing of John's Gospel,

the other three Gospel accounts have been around for a while,

especially Mark's Gospel thirty or more years before.

We know that John's Gospel develops our understanding

of the presence of Jesus, of the dwelling of Jesus.

The revelation of Jesus in the Temple

is a part of the unfolding revelation of who Jesus really is.

Already in Chapter 1, John the Baptist witnesses to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Now in the Cleansing passage, two words in Greek are used.

One can mean temple. The other can mean the inner sanctuary or the temple.

Jesus is the inner sanctuary.

The authorities misunderstand Jesus and think about the whole temple building.

The authorities miss the point.

CONTEXT

John moves the Cleansing of the Temple forward to an earlier section.

After the Wedding Feast of Cana, the first miracle.

Cana and the Temple Cleansing are both in Chapter Two.

WHY?

CAN YOU SEE HOW THEY FIT TOGETHER?

Think of a contrast.

Read Mary's response at Cana

and contrast it with the Authorities in the Temple.

Mary is confident in Jesus. She has faith in him.

She tells the stewards to do as Jesus says.

However, the Jewish authorities do not have faith in Jesus.

They don't truly listen.

And they don't come to a deeper understanding

of the divine presence of Jesus in their lives.

The Temple can be seen
as the centre of divine presence, the Holy of Holies.
And of liturgy, of reparation, of atonement, of reconciliation, of identity,
of offering praise to God, of expressing gratitude to God,
and a key to the ongoing Covenant between God and humanity.

There is an unfolding transition in John's Gospel around
and between three Passover events in the public ministry of Jesus.
Three years of public ministry of Jesus, with an unfolding of Jesus himself
as the sacrificial Lamb and the divine presence of Sanctuary.
Jesus is the new temple. Jesus is present.

LOVE

Nowhere in this passage does it say that is alright for us to be violent.
We note that Jesus cleanses, it is not the disciples cleansing.
Nowhere does it say here for disciples to conduct violent crusades
and bloodthirsty inquisitions.
Nowhere does it say for disciples to impose their particular culture by conquest.

Yet there is passion and energy and zeal in Jesus.
And as the Gospel chapters develop we see that
it a zeal and energy and passion of love.
The zeal and passion and energy to love God and to love our neighbour.

Again, we think of Mary at Cana, trusting in Jesus,
and allowing the stewards to do as Jesus says.
The wedding banquet where the good wine is served.

HOW DO WE SERVE THE GOOD WINE, THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS?

John's Gospel highlights the love of God.
The Cleansing of the Temple is not a stand-alone passage
to be misquoted and manipulated.
It is read and prayed in the context of Chapter Two
and in the context of the whole Gospel.

THIS LENT, WHERE IS OUR PASSION AND ZEAL AND ENERGY AS CHRISTIANS?

We now invite one of our young adults to explain how in this Year of Youth,
the Good News of Jesus will be celebrated in our local community and area.
We invite Damian to come forward to reflect on the zeal of our younger members.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/030418.cfm>]
[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook04032018>]

Painting: Cleansing the Temple (1875) – Carl Bloch - Public Domain

‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up’



**Love with Trust and
with Passion and
Energy and Zeal**

GOSPEL OF JOHN

www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com