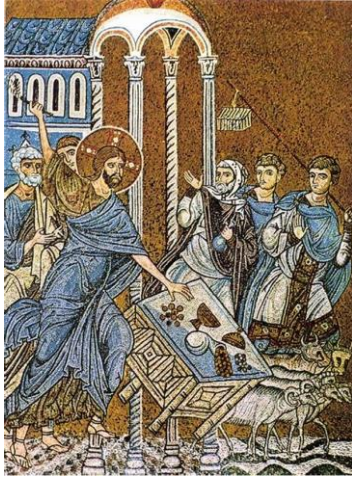


## Lent 3 - Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021



### **Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

Exodus 20. 1- 17

1 Corinthians 1.18-25

**John 2.13-22**

The Temple in Jerusalem represented the very heart of the Jewish nation. It was a place of sacrifice and forgiveness, a place steeped in holiness and power. It was the very place of God's presence.

The account of Jesus cleansing the Temple is one of those few stories that appear in all four Gospels. In the synoptic gospels the story comes right at the end of Jesus' ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke mention only this one occasion on which Jesus went to Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover.

But here in John's Gospel, the story comes instead at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, on the first occasion that the writer records Jesus travelling to Jerusalem for Passover. John is less concerned than the other gospel writers about the accurate chronology of events. He puts it here near the beginning of his gospel because for him the event symbolises the whole of Jesus' ministry - the whole reason for Jesus' coming into the world – to challenge the old way of doing things and to herald in the new.

For John this is a sign, a pointer, to Christ's death and resurrection and to a new order where the temple sacrifices will no longer be needed, when they will be replaced once and for all by Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross.

By the time Jesus visited the Temple on that day, the Jewish nation had lost sight of the true meaning of worship. The strict purity rituals had resulted in discrimination between men and women, rich and poor. The heart of worship, the heart of true faith had been lost in all the ritual. Jesus' anger overflowed and he had to do something about it.

By his words and actions Jesus was saying that the old way of doing things was no longer acceptable. It was time to re-assess, to look again at priorities and values, to re-establish the true meaning of faith.

And if we too are to take worship seriously both as individuals and as a church community, we must be sure that what we do on a Sunday reflects the values we hold the rest of the week. We must not be concerned just with getting our corporate Sunday worship right, although that's important of course, whether it's inside our church buildings, outside on the field, by zoom or posted on you-tube.

We need to make sure that our worship is also worked out in our lives the rest of the week. Worked out as we care for the vulnerable and the weak and the hurting, as we share the Good News of God's love, as we model the forgiveness and patience of Christ.

So as we look forward to a time when we emerge from lockdown and begin to put the events of the past year behind us, as we begin to re-assess, to look again at our priorities and values, what will our worship look like?

Trusting in God the Father, who leads us into his world,  
trusting in God the Son, the man of action,  
trusting in God the Holy Spirit, who gives us courage,  
may we be led to make a difference,  
so that all may know the power and the love of God.  
Amen

*Katy Carter*

## HYMN REFLECTION FOR LENT 3 by Malcolm Sturgess

This week's piece completes one year of hymn reflections. Thank you for reading them, and thank you for the feedback I have received from several parishioners. Roll on the time when we can all meet together and actually sing some of the lovely hymns we have thought about.

Many modern hymn books have Scripture Indexes, which are a boon to those given the responsibility of choosing hymns. Look up the set readings for any given service, and the Scripture Index lists all the hymns in that book which the editor believes to be relevant. There's just one problem, which occurs when the editors can recommend no hymns at-all to elucidate the set reading, which is the case today. There are well-known hymns about people who followed St. Matthew, debased themselves and declared they were no longer interested in worldly riches ("Riches I heed not", and "Take my silver and my gold"); but none about Jesus's reaction to people who would still turn the Temple into a den of thieves. So then one has to turn to one's own resources. Today's gentle little Lent hymn resonates with the readings very well; the people involved got the message a bit late, but they got it.

One learns by teaching, and I've learned about Rosamond Eleanor Herklots (1905-87) by researching this Reflection. She seems to have been a very kind, talented and interesting person. Born in India to English missionaries, she came back to England to be educated in Leeds. She spent much of the rest of her life in SE England, and this hymn, with fifteen others, was dedicated to the Vicar of St. Mary's Church, Bromley, and first published in 1966 in their Parish Magazine. It was inspired by digging up weeds, their roots a reminder of all that holds back our Christian growth. Although it looks traditional, it has quite a modern ring to it, with the words "broods" and "trivial".

As happens so often with Common Metre (8 6 8 6) hymns, this hymn is coupled with several different tunes in different hymn books. That's the trouble with CM hymns - there are too many of them. *St. Bernard* used to be the "right tune" for some of us, but in more recent books the Scottish tune, *Stracathro*, seems to be the accepted choice.

"Forgive our sins, as we forgive"  
you taught us, Lord, to pray;  
but you alone can grant us grace  
to live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and bless  
the unforgiving heart  
that broods on wrongs, and will not let  
old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your Cross reveals  
the truth we dimly knew;  
what trivial debts are owed to us,  
how great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls  
and bid resentment cease.  
Then bound to all in bonds of love,  
our lives will spread your peace.

MGS