

Much has been written about this famous scene from Scripture --- Jesus,,,,, seemingly losing his temper and lashing out at the moneychangers in the Temple.

If you tend to think of Jesus only as the meek and lowly Galilean, take a closer look at this Scripture passage.

Picture Jesus moving around the temple courtyard with a whip in His hand and fury in His voice.

He is kicking over the tables of the moneychangers and driving their livestock from the sacred grounds.

Everyone from merchants to pilgrims, are ducking behind columns as cattle stampede, doves fly and coins of all nations were scattered.

Startled pilgrims looked at each other in amazement.

Some probably nodded in agreement as this rabbi from Galilee was doing what they had often wished someone would do.

From the text, it's clear that Jesus was pretty unhappy that day with what he saw.

But there is a little bit more to this story.

Each year this pilgrimage during the Passover season was the ultimate journey for people of faith in the land of Israel.

Thousands upon thousands of faithful would travel to Jerusalem to the holiest site on earth.

It's important to realize that money changing in the Temple area was common, in fact, required.

Every male over twenty years of age would need to pay a half shekel to the temple treasury in addition to providing certain animals for sacrifice.

Shekels were basically the only money in circulation that didn't have the image of pagan rulers on them which made them unclean--- and so most other money had to be converted to shekels before it could be offered.

So it's likely that something else was upsetting Jesus.

Maybe it was the sheer volume of “business” that was being conducted that day, an overwhelming sense that the sacredness of the site was being compromised in some way.

Or maybe it was because Jesus knew that some of the moneychangers were cheating people --- being unjust in some way, maybe by manipulating the rate of exchange.

Or maybe it was simply to get their attention so he could say what he came to say --- something that would have been nearly impossible with all the people and animals and commotion going on.

Who knows?

For whatever reason, Jesus was not pleased with what he saw, with what John calls a “marketplace”.

That word --- marketplace --- has a very modern ring to it, doesn't it?

And when I think of a marketplace, I think of a place where everything is for sale.

I've never heard of a marketplace where everything is free.

I don't think it would last very long with that business model.

A marketplace is a place where someone gives something and expects something in return.

And maybe that's supposed to be our takeaway this day, maybe that's the **lesson** Jesus is trying to teach us.

Perhaps Jesus was upset with the marketplace he saw that day,
because everything seemed to have a price,
because everyone was trying to wheel and deal and take advantage.

Do you ever wonder if Jesus is unhappy with those same things in our lives --- unhappy with the many things we treat as commodities to sell?

In other words, what are we “selling” that we should be giving away for “free”?

What about our forgiveness?

Do we give it only when someone promises us that they will “never do it again”?

What about our trust?

Do we give people the benefit of the doubt?

Or do we make them show us they can be trusted BEFORE we give them our trust?

What about our mercy?

Do we treat people kindly or harshly --- the way we would like to be treated or with judgment, suspicion and contempt?

What about our compassion?

Do we only give it to people we “like” and withhold it from people who make us uncomfortable?

What about our generosity?

Are we generous only if we get recognized in some way --- only if we get a gift or a plaque or a name on a wall?

And what about our love?

Do we only give it to those who we consider loveable?

Today as we continue our journey through Lent, we should all take a deep look within.

And not simply look at “what” we do,

But lets also look at the “why” --- “why” we do the things we do.

Do we have an agenda when we do things, what is our motivation?

Do we pass on the blessings God has given us freely, or do they have a price?

Are we demanding a fair rate of exchange for our love, mercy, kindness, forgiveness and compassion?

Today let us think about the things in our lives that Jesus needs to take a whip to, and then ask ourselves,,,

what are we selling in the marketplace of the temple,,,,,
the temple that is in each of us, a holy place where God dwells?

And let us pray that we never use the wonderful, life-giving blessings God has given us as simply goods to be traded.

Instead, let's give them away totally free to everyone,, and ask for absolutely nothing in return.