

### **3rd Sunday of Lent (B)**

In our readings this weekend I think the Church is asking us to reprioritize our lives; to think about what we hold most dear in our life, what we love the most, and to ask ourselves if it is the greatest good.

Cutting to the chase, Christ should be the most important person to us. He should have the most space in our hearts. But for most of us, we can lose sight of this, and begin to put other persons or things in our lives that should be completely reserved for Him. This is exactly what was happening in our Gospel, and why Jesus had to drive these merchants out of the temple.

In order to understand why Jesus was so mad we have to understand the layout of the temple. (Side: Jesus' anger was not sinful. Righteous anger. Anger at sin and injustice is good. Anger towards people isn't.) There were three main parts to the temple. The outermost part was the place where Israelites engaged with the world. Non-believers, called Gentiles, were allowed in this area. This was a place for instruction and dialogue. Today we call this evangelization or catechesis. The area inside here was reserved only for believers. This was a place of prayer. The innermost part was reserved only for the priests, where sacrifice happened, and where the most sacred area was, the Holy Place, which contained the Ark of the Covenant.

Jesus was angry because these merchants crept from the outer part into the inner area where only prayer was allowed. They allowed outside influences into an

area which was reserved only for God. Their hearts and their love had become disordered, and so Jesus came in to reorder things. The necessary action that day required flipping tables over. Sometimes we need these dramatic displays to wake us up.

We see just how much God cares about our prayer lives. The people were not praying in area in the temple where only prayer was allowed. In the temple of our hearts, what have we allowed to creep into our prayer lives? In what ways do we allow ourselves to become distracted from our conversation with Christ? Or have we allowed our hearts to love someone or something more than God? These merchants held money as the highest good, and so didn't even think twice about selling things in the inner part of the temple. What do we love more than God? Today is a great opportunity for all of us take a step back, reorder our love, reprioritize our lives so that God is the highest good and greatest love in our lives. Only then do we find happiness, only then do we love others correctly.

So if we need this change, this reset in our lives, how do we do this? Our first reading gives us the first step in how to do this. The 10 Commandments help us to keep our lives properly ordered. They help to keep the necessary boundaries, for love to be free and ordered by truth.

I think most of us tend to take the 10 Commandments negatively. They tell us a bunch of no's. Being told "no" is no fun, so we can look to other sources for guidance. The truth is, behind every "no" is an even bigger "yes" to something

else. We say “no” to something because we are for something else. (Marriage example.) We tend to take the 10 Commandments, and everything else the Church tells us not to do, as an hindrance to our freedom. The reality is that all of these things help to promote truth, and when we move away from this and try to do things on our own we become enslaved by the things we think will make us happy. True freedom is not doing what we want to do when we want to do it. True freedom is action according to truth, and freedom needs boundaries. The 10 Commandments provide us the boundaries, so that true freedom and true love can be promoted.

We all know that we need boundaries and rules. We see this everywhere. Why do parents tell their children to only play in the backyard? But when it concerns us and our moral lives we reject them. If we are honest with ourselves, we reject these rules and boundaries because it requires a change in our lives. We don't want to make this particular change, and so we follow to logic of the world, rather than the logic of God, and cry “foul” to the Church. What do we love the most? If it is something other than Jesus now is the time to make some changes.

I'm reminded of the Mumford & Sons song “Awake My Soul” which goes, “In these bodies we live. In these bodies we will die. Where you invest your love, you invest your life.” What we hold as important in our lives is where our heart is. Our hearts need to be reserved for God to have true freedom and love. Let's not afraid to turn a few tables over, so as to love Christ with our whole heart.