

***Reflection on John 2:13-22 for a Sunday in Lent
From your Spiritual Director***

He went to Jerusalem for a celebration. What was he thinking as he walked along the road? Did he run into anyone along the way? Did they stop and share small talk? "How are your mother and father? Is he still working in his woodshop? And how is Mary's cousin?" Or did he just hurry past everyone with other things on his mind?

The temple was packed with people and animals. Animals in the church? I am still trying to get my congregation to have a Blessing of the Animals, and they are farmers! Right away he made a whip out of cords. Where did he get the cord? Did he have them with him or did he buy them from one of the vendors? One thing seems certain - he was angry. He used his new whip to chase everyone out of the temple, including the animals (my church would have been happy about that part). And then he dumped all the money on the floor and turned over the tables the bankers were using. Was that really necessary? And he told those who were selling birds to take them out too. The birds were probably the most common item in the market, since they were sold as pets and for food. I am told that dove meat is delicious. Well Jesus did not care about that, he did not like having a market in the temple. I wonder what he would think of some of our churches on Sunday morning, when we have collections for mission projects, girl scout cookies, youth fundraisers, local charities, not to mention the money offering itself.

The disciples remembered a strange phrase - "Zeal for your house will consume me." Now, I am not sure that is what I would be thinking if I saw someone turning over the tables in the back of one of my churches. But Jesus was obviously consumed by all that was taking place. The Jews were also upset and they wanted to know his reasoning behind all this. And here's where I think we need to listen because some of us are prone to taking everything in the Bible literally rather than as a sign for something else. Jesus told them to destroy the temple and he would rebuild it in three days. Now the temple had been under construction for 46 years, so that did not make sense at all. No one could rebuild it in three days. But Jesus was not talking about the temple in which they worshiped (or sold goods and exchanged money). He was talking about the temple of his body, and they knew what that meant or at least they remembered what he had said. He would die and be raised from the dead in three days.

What about the temple of our bodies? How do we treat our temples? What kinds of things do we put in them? How do we abuse them? Do we even treat them as temples? These questions and this passage are part of our devotions for Lent. They make us slow down and ask the difficult questions, and even more troubling, they cause us to listen to some of the difficult answers. Lent is a time for reflecting on our habits, things we do everyday without thinking. As you practice your Lenten discipline and read the Lenten scriptures, remember as the disciples did some of the things that Jesus said. Remember your body is a temple for God. Think about what you consume, and what you do or say. How will God be affected? Do not destroy your temple - let it be a place for God to dwell.

The disciples remembered and believed the word that Jesus had spoken. May it be so with each of us. Blessings on the Lenten journey.