



Third Sunday in Lent– March 7th, 2021

Sunny Schwarz

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Jesus is the place where the actual presence of God dwells among his people. What a message of God’s overflowing love for us that is. Those around him including his disciples probably did not understand the full significance of what Jesus had said in the heat of the moment! Maybe only after his death and resurrection they fully understood that God is indeed "dead serious" with his love for us, that Jesus is our temple. He is the temple that was destroyed as he died on the cross and that same temple was raised within three days.

So what happened in the temple that day?

What was it that made Jesus so angry that he drove everybody out, thousands of people and animals, pouring out the coins of the money-changers and overturning their tables?

He must have been aware of what was commonly done in the temple – and what he saw was not much different to any other day, except for it being the busiest day of the year maybe:

But see, the animals were sold where they were usually sold as sacrifices, the money changers were sitting at their tables to attend to the pilgrims and foreigners and everyone, amidst that chaotic scene, well, they all did **business as usual.**

John puts this story at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and in his Gospel this happened shortly after Jesus attended the wedding in Cana. Two very different stories that John tells us here and it shows Jesus’ ministry in its totality.





At the wedding, we see a somewhat hesitant Jesus – “My time has not yet come” – but then he turns water into wine and acts with love and compassion for that couple whereas in today’s story, John wants to show that determined Jesus, who now has to resort to more extreme measures to “be heard”.

It is a drastic move Jesus make here – it is indeed an act of disruption that cut to the core of the Jewish faith and all it stood for.

He chose the additional power of the whip not in order to hurt anybody physically, but in order to get everybody’s immediate attention, to deplore the Jewish faith that had been replaced and overshadowed by **business as usual** in His Father’s House.

STOP MAKING MY FATHER’S HOUSE A MARKET-PLACE.

His Father’s House – that is Solomon’s Temple, was the only place of true worship in all of Israel, for the Jews real worship had to involve sacrifice and that could only take place at the temple.

So this wasn’t the house of the people of God, but Jesus’ Father’s house.

This was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was set in its centre holding the tablets engraved with the ten commandments - in the Holy of Holies.

We have been reminded of them in the Old Testament reading a few moments ago and there, in the heart of the temple complex, in the heart of the city which served as the spiritual and political heart of Israel...

where God dwelt among God’s people – instead of true worship, the people preferred to do **business as usual**.

The former purity rituals – the preparations of the Passover feast and the holy sacrifices – it all had become a market place, and even worse, while doing their business, God’s people were openly discriminated.

Jews permitted in the inner court, Gentiles only allowed in the outer court, then there were different sacrifices for the poor such as pigeons because they were affordable, but not sacrifices such as oxen and sheep which were offered only to the rich...



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And amidst the tradesmen and the pilgrims, the oxen and sheep and doves and all this fraud ...

Jesus came to realize that one thing had completely sold out:

The true worship. The people's passion for God.

And that is what made him furious,

and no one was spared his anger a few minutes later.

This was not the time to discuss, but to act.

STOP MAKING MY FATHER'S HOUSE A MARKET-PLACE.

Jesus, born a Jew, a committed Jew indeed, chases them out of the temple to cleanse it - from their behaviour, from their empty rituals and their **business as usual**.

He urges them to reassess their faith and respect for this holy place - so that when they enter this temple again – they shall undertake their rituals as an expression of **real** worship without distraction.

To the glory and praise of God only.

What about us?

Do we need to reassess?

It's so easy to fall into the trap of business as usual and being distracted.

It happens everywhere: in friendships, in marriages, at home and at work and in church as well.

But distraction is a symptom in the same way that the animals and moneychangers in the temple were not the problem, but mere symptoms of something deeper going on, of the lack of true worship and the people's passion for God.

A true worship can take place anywhere – and it does not have to be beautiful as long as it is righteous and faithful.

But this story took place in the Holy of Holies.



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It was God's house, not just one of the houses of God.

Our churches today are places to come together and listen to God's word, but God is no more present in our stone buildings as anywhere else.

A huge difference.

It is easy to get distracted if we don't fully commit ourselves to true worship. And business as usual can creep in unnoticed over time.

Do we always keep our eyes and minds focused on the service and our hearts and ears open to the word of God?

Or are we watching others now and then, do we let our thoughts divert to quite unimportant matters?

Sometimes we can't help but notice what is happening behind and around us – somebody is arriving late or dropping a book...

Has our Sunday church service become somewhat business as usual for us?

Are we maybe in need of a spiritual spring clean?

Would Jesus be content with us; would he believe us when he hears us say "We confess that we have sinned" and later when we confirm "We do this in remembrance of Him."

Or would he rather drive us out, swinging a whip of cords over our heads?

Maybe not. No, we are not perfect, not at all.

I'm sure we all can improve and aim for more focus on worship.

Here we are, once again gathered virtually to worship together in our Living Room Service, nothing you or I would have expected only a year ago. But most churches are still or even again closed and we have established this link with all of you online.

Some of us might prefer attending a local church service on a Sunday, some might rather enjoy this more personal and private worship in their living room. And that's all fine. It's good to have these options because Jesus wants us to worship.



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What he doesn't want us to do, is to **pretend** to worship.

So wherever, whenever and however we worship,
if it means true worship to us, then it hopefully is true worship to Jesus as well.

Right now, we are solely responsible for the amount of distraction we allow:
Did we take the time to fully commit ourselves to this worship,
did we switch off the phone and draw the curtains maybe or is there anything we
might want would to improve next time to allow more focus and less distraction?

And what about the rest of the week?

That true form of worship that God requires of us
takes place all week and we normally bring together all of the values we hold
during the week and reflect on a Sunday.

So, let us reassess our everyday lives –
by consciously turning our **business as usual** moments into small acts of worship –
by showing kindness and compassion, by sharing the good news of God's love,
by caring for the weak and being a friend for one another.

Whatever we do, let us truly try to do all that "in remembrance of Him".

Jesus is the Temple.

He is the place where the presence of God dwells among His people.

No matter where or how or when we worship, let us make sure that

our passion for God never sells out, and never becomes **business as usual**.

AMEN.

This sermon was written as part of my enquirers' programme as we cannot hold
physical services at the moment. Please fill in the feedback form on the following
pages and send it back to Fr Stan or myself. Thank you for your support!

Sunny





Content and Structure

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The sermon was engaging					
A fresh insight into the scriptural passage(s) was given					
There was a clear structure					
The language used was appropriate for the people					
The sermon was appropriate for the occasion					
The material covered was pastorally sensitive					

Delivery

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The student was audible					
The student spoke clearly and at a good pace					
The student seemed at home in the space					
Body language was appropriate					
The student's manner was engaging					





General Comments

1. Please note two things that you appreciated about the sermon:
 - i)

 - ii)

2. Are there one or two areas where the student can develop their preaching?
 - i)

 - ii)

3. Did you find anything difficult or unhelpful?

4. Any other comments:

Thank you for your help. We appreciate you taking the time to complete this form.

