

Home Group notes for the week following 4 March 2018

LENT THREE – CLEANSING AND RENEWAL

AS WE GATHER

It was obligatory for all Jewish men who lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem to make an annual pilgrimage to attend the Passover at the temple. Jews from all over the world also made this pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime to attend the Passover feast and pay the temple tax.

When Jesus cleansed the temple of merchants, money changers, and their wares He revealed His passion / zeal for God first and above all.

READING SCRIPTURE **John 2:13-22** [optional readings Exodus 20:1-17 Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1:18-25]

THINKING TOGETHER

John records that Jesus was particularly angry because all the trading took place on temple grounds in the court of the Gentiles (John 2:14). Worship being the main purpose for visiting the temple, this was the area where religious leaders should have been meeting those Gentiles seeking to know, worship, and pray to the one true God [optional readings Mark 11:17 and Isaiah 56:6-7]. The House of God was no longer a place of worship but had become a market place (John 2:15-16).

Why do you go to church? Discuss

Does righteous anger against injustice give us the right to use violence against wrongdoers? Discuss

Jesus had God's authority when He reacted in controlled and righteous anger against the traders, because God's house was being desecrated. There was worship without reverence. [optional readings Psalm 69:7-9 Malachi 3:1].

Do you know, or have you experienced, any of the forms worship without reverence can manifest? Discuss

The condition of the temple was an indication of the spiritual condition of the nation. Religion was presided over by worldly minded men, driven by worldly values and goals. It had become one of dull routine.

The religious leaders demanded of Jesus that He show the source of His authority – just as they would have tested any new prophet (John 2:18). [optional reading 1 Corinthians 1:22].

By cleansing the temple Jesus declared war on the hypocrisy of the religious leaders – ultimately leading to Him giving His life for His ministry (John 2:19-21).

He thought of His body as the Temple of God, making Him greater than the temple in Jerusalem (John 2:22). [optional reading Matthew 12:1-8].

He had come to render the then current religious system of worship obsolete and unnecessary (John 4:23). [optional readings Isaiah 1:11-17 Psalm 51:15-17].

His hearers misunderstood Him because they were spiritually blind

Are you (sometimes) blind to spiritual truth? Discuss

No sacrifice we make will ever put us right with God.

How does Jesus cleanse us so that we are able to worship God? Discuss

How are we made right with God? Discuss

As fulfilment of the Law and the Messianic prophecies, Jesus ushered in a new system of grace, truth and inward integrity.

Christians sometimes think of their bodies as the temple of Christ – what does this mean in your life? Discuss

In what ways can we show our true devotion to God? Discuss

IN CLOSING

This reading gives us the truth that our contact with God, our entry into the presence of God, our approach to God, is not dependent on anything we humans can do. Wherever we are we have our inner temple – the presence of the risen Christ.

It can be said that it is the presence of the Living Christ that makes the world into the Temple of God.

What is the nature of your relationship with Christ / God?

PRAYER

God of passion and power,
your Son drove the money changers out of the Temple.
Cleanse us of our arrogance, and through Jesus Christ our Lord,
recreate in us a dwelling for your holiness. Amen