

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Third Sunday in Lent

Gospel Word

John 2:13–25

Today's Gospel reading shows Jesus expressing deep anger. He must have felt that *this* was really wrong! He could have described what kinds of ritual sacrifices expressed true worship of God. He could have explained how unjust practices were defrauding the poor by selling animals and foodstuffs for religious sacrifice. He could have told another parable about what God was really looking for in people's hearts. But instead, he took matters into his own hands and cleaned house—his father's house! Tables were overturned, animals were freed from their cages, and coins were spilled. Maybe Jesus felt that dramatic action was necessary to make his point. Though it is obvious that the locals did not understand what was upsetting him; the Gospel reading explained. His allusion to the presence of God in his own body escaped them.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

This event has a very important message for us: authentic worship does not include empty ritual sacrifices. God is not impressed with or manipulated by the external. God is not someone whom we deal with like we might a shopkeeper or car salesperson. Religion is not a sacred form of “let's make a deal.” We cannot buy God's support. God is *already* on our side. God is already generous and concerned about our best interests. We cannot manipulate God by either fine words or actions.

It's natural for us to want to control and manipulate. Especially today, because of our technological advances, we feel more in control than ever before. But we have to step back and ask whether we have any need to attempt control of God. If someone loves you deeply, is always thinking of you, and trying to help you in any way that's possible, why would you want to manipulate or control that person? Just let it happen. Let God be God. Be open to God's loving intent as much as possible. Be alert to what God may be trying to accomplish through you and in you. And give thanks, realizing all that God has already done for you. That seems more in harmony with what should go on in God's house.

One-line Prayer

God the Son,
Increase our trust in you.
Amen.