

Third Sunday in Lent

EXCHANGING TEMPLES

John 2:13-22

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Analysis by Michael Hoy

13The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. 15Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' 17His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' 18The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' 19Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' 20The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' 21But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

DIAGNOSIS: Old Temple

Step One: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Buyers and Sellers*

The malady is not remedied by fixing up the temple, even cleansing it, but recognizing it for what it is. The real malady

here, as also for us, is that business goes on as usual. The status quo does not change from the old mandates of Moses. What is going on here is simply status quo. This is not simply a way that temple personnel (sellers) make a living; it's a way of providing the temple worshippers (consumers) with the goods and services they need under this system. It takes a sheep or at least a dove to make the sacrifice. And rather than bring one along, just pick one up on the way. Kind of convenient, right?

Step Two: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Resisting Change, Unbelieving*

Jesus is turning the tables on the old. Literally. But if anything made him look like a revolutionary terrorist, this was it. You just can't stop the market. His action is met with resistance by those who have it, and want it, all in place. But their resistance, their demand for a better sign from God, is part of their own internal malady (ours, too). They honestly believe they are doing the right thing in this. But their faith in the practices of Moses is their unbelief in the One who just turned the tables-and the authority he re-presents.

Step Three: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Destroyed*

Which leads to the gravest malady of all... someone has to pay. The marketeers have their victim in their sights; and he is not unaware of their intents. But he does offer a proposition that spells disaster: destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. The marketeers are aware of the secular cycles of all of this. This cycle took 46 years. It ain't coming back overnight (or in three days). Yet the message is heard: temples can be destroyed. And this secular one would never come back from the destruction. That is doomed.

PROGNOSIS: New Temple

Step Four: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Destroyed... and Risen*

But Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body: This temple can be destroyed (as indeed it was) and in three days it will rise again, new as it is. And yet he is always new, even now. He offers freely his newness here. He is the connecting link between us and the owner of the temple of worship. This is God's temple, and Jesus makes it more personal than that, "my Father's house." His death and resurrection will open the worship for all, without money and without price, to a new life with God by grace.

Step Five: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Remembered, Believing*

The followers of Jesus remember this after he is raised from the dead. The light bulbs go on in the Spirit-provided utility of faith, and they say, "Oh, yeah!" Here in Jesus is a mercy that is far greater than all justice, a life beyond all destruction and death. The tables are turned on hearts that once could only imagine a single way. Now they see and believe the sign that Jesus is giving in the temple of his body.

Step Six: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Consuming Zeal*

Which leads them to consuming zeal. Literally. Consuming the body and blood of Jesus in the feast of life, they get the zeal to go out into the world so that all may consume. Perhaps what is consumed is the disciples themselves; but so was their Lord. The promise is that no one is left hungry in this worship, though. And after all is consumed, there is a consummation. That's why we're zealous enough, by faith, to see it all happen and be participants in its happening, working as revolutionaries even today for the One who dies and rises.