

Third Sunday in Lent

MARKETPLACE

John 2:13-22

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Analysis by Mark Marius

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 marketplace!" 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DIAGNOSIS: An Outdated Business Plan

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Sellers*

Everyone needs to make sacrifice. Everyone needs to pay their church tax. What is wrong with helping this process along? Is it so wrong to provide the things a Jewish person needs to fulfill

their obligation? But Jesus doesn't see it this way. Not with him now on the scene. Jesus came to be sacrifice but that really puts a wrench in the old business plan and model. These time-honored acts of faith have been good business but not necessarily good faithfulness. All churches that become institutionalized face this same scrutiny. Are they selling a name, a brand, or are they giving people God?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : Buyers

We are hungry for what the institutions are selling. How nice and convenient for us: Why bring our own sacrifice when we can buy one at the synagogue. We don't always trust that we are good enough for God, so we have to embellish things a bit. We are happy to buy faithfulness because it provides us and others evidence that we are being faithful. Sometimes Jesus isn't as attractive as everything that we associate with him—blessings, salvation, forgiveness. Let me buy these things and I will be satisfied indeed.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : Closing up Shop

But God is not buying it. He is not buying the selling or buying. He sees through our motives and identifies our untrusting and selfish behavior. Buyers and sellers are hoping to profit from one another. But God sees it different. He is about to shut down our bad business practices and close up shop. Which leaves us out in the cold. When sellers and buyers have no place to conduct business then they have to go underground. And going underground is as good as being dead.

PROGNOSIS: A New Business Model

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : A New Building

But Jesus is passionate (has zeal) for his Father's house. So he will not leave it in a state of rubble. He will be the temple, he will be the sacrifice, he will handle all of our business. The old business plan is no good, but the new one established in

Christ is eternal. His death and resurrection seal the deal with God and us. As he was raised from the dead so too were we brought in from out in the cold, and up from underground. We no longer have to engage in buying and selling, only receiving the sacrifice, the new building materials of our lives, Christ's body and blood.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : A New Sign

And we wonder what sign we have from God and Christ. It's the water and the Word contained in our baptism; it's the bread, wine, and Word contained in Holy Communion. It's the forgiveness of sins and sharing of God's peace with our brothers and sisters. These are our component parts of the new business model that come from trusting what Christ has done for us. And as we do these "practices" it changes us so that we ourselves become signs for others to see. Especially as we bypass what others are buying and selling in regards to faithfulness.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : A New Mission

And so as we become signs, we don't just post them in front of church buildings. No. We are signs that are deployed out in the world. We take our signs to the people. We look for those engaged in bad business practices and share with them what Christ's zeal has done for us. We point them to Christ, we give them Christ, and not necessarily a church building. The mission, new mission, is outside not inside.