

**Text: John 2: 11-22**

**Theme: Series: John on Jesus – Who is This Man? The Saviour of the World**

**Sermon delivered by Revd. Canon Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 02/04/2017 at 10.30am**

The story of the wedding at Cana ended with the statement that the disciples believed. “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.” (John 2:11). So the miracle of turning the water into wine was called a sign, and the effect of the sign was to reveal the glory of Jesus - and the effect of that revelation was to bring about belief in the disciples.

Now look at how today’s story ends. The story is about Jesus driving money-changers out of the temple, and being asked for a sign, and telling them he would raise the destroyed temple in three days. And the story ends in verse 22 like this: “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

**John declared the purpose for writing his gospel in 20:31-...But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”**

John is so clear and to let us know the effects the events had on the first eye witnesses and he prays that they will have the same effect when I preach them. (Compare 1 John 1:1-4). And I think it is also true that the reason belief happens is because in these stories Jesus manifests his glory. So, **we see sign, the glory is manifested and belief follows. Sign, Glory, Belief.**

Verses 13–14 set the stage for Jesus’ action. “It was almost time for the Jewish Passover and Jesus went to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves and others were doing *bureau de change*.” So inside the temple court, a place meant for prayer and other acts of worship, there were pens of cattle and sheep, and cages of pigeons and sellers sitting around them waiting to make a transaction, and others who were prepared to exchange a pilgrim’s money into the right currency so that they could make a purchase.

The outward reason for this set up was probably that the law required sacrifices of cattle and sheep and pigeons, and many worshippers would have come a long way and would not have brought their sacrifice with them. So this made the animals readily available for purchase. You could say it was the loving thing to do. Make the purchases convenient.

### **Jesus’ Response**

#### **Now what is Jesus’ response when he saw this? Verses 15–16:**

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” Jesus obviously did not approve of what he saw. Why not? What was the problem? Before I answer that question, let us put the event in context.

Don’t jump too quickly to the other Gospels. For example, when Jesus did something similar in Matthew, he said, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers” (Matthew 21:13). John does not report either of those two things as the problem here. He doesn’t say: “It’s a house of prayer.” And he doesn’t say they are “robbers.” Is John even reporting the same event? In Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus drives money-changers out of the temple at the end of his three-year ministry. In John, he is doing it at the

beginning of his ministry. **There is no compelling reason to think this is not a different event altogether from what happened three years later. Jesus' response is not the same. And the outcome in Jerusalem is not the same.**

So what matters here is what Jesus does say. He says, in verse 16, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" Jesus does not say that the sellers and money-changers are robbers, or that the animals are defective, or that the place is a place of prayer—though it is. He says that they have turned his Father's house into a bazaar. A market.

The disciples saw this incredible display of fury - he was using a homemade whip of ropes, and loosing the cattle (cattle are big!), and dumping boxes of money on the ground, and turning over tables, and saying (with who knows how piercing a voice over all the bleating), "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a market." And when the disciples saw this, they connected it with Psalm 69:9 where David the king says, "Zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me." Jesus was consumed with zeal for his Father's house. And reproaches were, no doubt, raining down on him like torrents: "What in God's name do you think you are doing?!"

### **What Made Jesus So Angry?**

So what made Jesus so angry? The contrast he pointed out was between "my Father's house" and a marketplace. **"My Father's house" means: This house is about knowing and loving and treasuring a person, my Father. In this temple, my Father has supreme place.** He is the supreme treasure here. "A day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" (Psalm 84:11). "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (Psalms 73:25).

But that focus has been replaced by a focus on trade. And there is no reference here to the people who needed the animals - the pilgrims who were buying the sheep and pigeons. The anger is all directed at those who were selling and handling the currency. Jesus could see through the veneer of religious helpfulness to the heart. In fact, in verse 25 John says, "He himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25).

What is their response to Jesus' fury? Verse 18: "So the Jews said to him, **'The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"**' That's not an encouraging response. Why not? Because it confirms what they are hiding.

They don't need more signs to prove what's true. They need hearts that love what they know is true. They're trying to turn a problem of greed and self-love into a problem of knowledge. If we can deflect the issue onto his authority, then the light won't shine so brightly on our covetousness.

### **Jesus' Double-Layered Answer**

He now replaces the former temple and becomes the new "place" where everyone may meet God and fellowship with God. Remember what he said in Matthew 12:6, "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here." And he meant himself.

Why all the reference to this sign Jesus has given? John declared the purpose for writing his gospel in 20:31-...But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."