

Spring Cleaning with Jesus



Jesus is in the temple and he means business.
He's come to proclaim the new covenant, even

though he knows it will cost him his life. But Jesus is not a go-along-get-along guy. For openers, he won't preach the good news surrounded by the commercial corruption that permeates the house of the Lord. So he overturns counters, dumps the cash drawers and drives the merchants and their livestock from the temple.

It seems straight forward enough, until we realise that once again Jesus is operating on more than one level. The temple that he says will be destroyed and rebuilt is a direct reference to his own approaching sacrificial death and resurrection. And indirectly he tells us that if we are to live in the house of the Lord, we have to do it with reverence and respect. Jesus is all about love. But his love is consistently obedient to the Father. And as prophesied: *Zeal for (God's) house will consume me.*

In fulfilment of the prophecy Jesus is not consumed with love of the temple's architecture, its construction or even its sanctuary. The Greek word for house, *oikos*, also means household. And it is for the household of God, his errant misguided people that Jesus laments. He calls on his people to recoil from sin, to purge themselves... to repent. This translation also reinforces Christ's identifying himself as a temple

that will be destroyed and rise again in three days. As part of his household, as members of the Body of Christ, we know we will rise with him to eternal life.

As a kid, hearing this gospel for the first time, naturally I identified with the good guy... the righteous Jesus. And I looked down on the bad guys... the money changers who were messing-up the temple. Over time I've come to realise a deeper meaning. The people that Jesus drove from the temple are the very same people he came to save. They are sinners. They are us. The people who mocked him are the same people he would lay down his life for. They are sinners... no different from us... especially when we mock him with indifferent lip-service and call it prayer... especially when we live self-centred lives and call ourselves Christians. Jesus was not deceived by the faux piety of the money changers. He saw through them as he sees through us. And yet, even in his wrath, he loved them as he loves us. He died for us all: in our sins... in our greed, in our neglect, in our arrogance, in our cruelty. Jesus does not love us for whom we ought to be or for whom we want to be. He loves us as we are ... in our falls and in our resurrections.

He does not drive us out. He gathers us in... to live in his love... to live for his love. Jesus uses this gospel to tell us that we have a lot of cleaning-up to do. Paul tells us: *Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (1Cor 3:16.) Lent is set aside for each of us to give our temples a really thorough spring cleaning. Sure, we're spiritually sprucing up all year round. But Lent is reserved for the really heavy-duty job... purging the temple that God gave us, rededicating it to his service.

Start with a rigorous spiritual inventory: Do we truly accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour? Is he at the centre of our life or on the periphery? Are we in continuous conversation with Jesus or have we silently drifted away? What immediate opportunities do we have to witness Christ's love? What obstacles exist? What weaknesses can we isolate and eliminate? What strengths can we build on? What about our relationships: family, neighbors, co-workers? What are our priorities? How do we spend our time?

This isn't a complete list. But it is a good start to tackling your own spiritual spring cleaning. So, roll up your sleeves and pitch in. It will make your life neater, healthier, happier... holier. And don't

This Week's Focus

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forget to ask Jesus to lend a hand... throwing out the guilt, polishing up the joy, making room for love. Spring cleaning with Jesus... that's what Lent is for.