

**Spring Cleaning**  
**John 2: 13-22**  
**Lent 3**  
**7 March 2021**

The last couple of weeks I've been on a real cleaning and organizing binge. It has been a great activity, sorting through things that had just been shoved out of sight and taking the time to ask myself – do I really need this? When was the last time I used that? It has been a time to take stock of what I need in my life now and what is no longer useful, or what could be put to better use by someone else. An early spring cleaning. If you are anything like me, as soon as we start to get those nice days, even if it is still a bit chilly out, you want to throw open the windows and let a bit of fresh air in, and clean out the dust and the winter dirt from the corners of your house. As spring approaches it just feels like it is the perfect time to reassess, declutter and make room for new things, for new life.

This particular moment in Lent is a reminder to do something similar with our spiritual life. It is a reminder that we need to take stock of what we are doing, and ask ourselves what patterns we are creating, and determine if there is anything we are clinging to that is no longer needed or healthy. It is a time to pray about what we need

to make room for in our life. Because it is easy to get stuck in routine. It is easy to accumulate stuff and get into ruts, even in our spiritual life, and too often we don't even know it has happened, until we hit a wall. We need a reason to stop, and look and be honest. Today Jesus gives us the reason.

This passage today in our gospel has always made me kind of queasy to be honest. I always like it at first, the drama, the passion, the energy with which Jesus makes his point. I love this passage for the fact that, after reading it, no one can say Jesus was meek or mild. He was a trouble maker who spoke his mind and made his point. And I love that about him. The part that makes me queasy though is when I get off my high horse and stop judging those money changes and realize that Jesus is standing there, hands on hips, looking straight at me. The part that makes me queasy is when I hear Jesus saying, "What in your life needs some changing? Because I'm talking to you here too, you know."

You see the thing that is interesting about Jesus' displeasure in this particular narrative is that unlike other times, Jesus isn't railing against kings and their injustices and riches, he isn't railing against the forces of empires or those who reject God. He is reacting to

moneychangers. Regular people, like you and me, whose business has been tolerated and perhaps even encouraged, by the temple. They are just people going about their regular day, who have never likely stopped to think about why their actions may be a problem, may be offensive, may be contributing to a system that is opposed to the ways of God. They are just trying to make a living. They are just regular people, like you and me, who aren't doing anything terribly awful, in the grand scheme of things, but who had settled into a comfortable routine that wasn't particularly life giving or in line with God's will, either. They had settled into a pattern that put their profits ahead of their faith.

You know it is so easy for us to grab our own whips when we read this, to point to others and say "that, that right there is exactly what Jesus was talking about!! This is what is wrong with our world" But before we even begin thinking about the tables that need overturning in our society (and there are a lot of them!), we need to imagine Jesus coming to our own house and overturning all of the things that we've become too comfortable with, that are no longer serving God, or our calling.

Because if we are honest, sometimes the things that pull us away from God are not always the things that the world inflicts upon us, but are the things that we allow into our lives, the things that we allow to overtake our attention and our hearts. And sometimes we get so caught up and distracted by the pressures of the world, the anxieties of these days, the uncertainties of this time, that we lose sight of the fact that we are not alone in this. Whether the table we need overturning is one resting on profits or greed or even anxiety and pre-occupation with the things we can't control, there are things in our lives that cause us to forget to turn to God, forget to pause and pray, forget whose we are.

That is why this passage tends to make me a bit queasy, because I know deep down that I am no different from the money changers. In my own life I get caught up in patterns that aren't necessarily life giving or healthy for myself or my world. I have tables that need overturning, tables that rest on anxiety and fear and preoccupation. I know I can get overly enmeshed in work which gives me an excuse to avoid other things that challenge and stretch me. Living in lockdown I spend too much time checking the covid numbers and worrying, and not enough time praying. As I eagerly

await my covid vaccine I too often forget about the other countries in the world who will be waiting years to get their vaccines. Once I get my own jabs then I'll make time to think about vaccine equity and justice. With my own concerns and preoccupation with my safety and the reopening of my community, the suffering of people far away tends to remain far away. I have some tables that need overturning. Those are just some of them.

And I bet you aren't so different.

So thank God for Lent. Because Lent is the time for us to look critically at things like this – on the way we are living, the decisions we are making, the patterns that we lean on. It is the time for us to see if our actions are in line with our faith, with our beliefs, and if they aren't, it is a time for us to repent, and commit again to doing things different, commit again to a spiritual spring cleaning, and let that spirit blow through us.

Because sometimes, maybe now more than ever, we focus on surviving more than we do on living. We focus on surviving more than we do on right relationship. We focus on surviving more than we do on our calling. We focus on today, on getting through today, more than we think about the bigger picture. And no wonder. This has

been a tough year, and it would not be surprising if you feel like your inner resources are limited, and just getting through each day is taking more energy than you could have imagined. But that is exactly why we need this reminder today, that is exactly why we need to take time to re-evaluate what we are giving our limited energies to, and who and what is filling us, who and what is informing our life and giving us strength and hope, not only for today, but for tomorrow, too.

It is scary to make change, or to have change thrust upon you, it is hard to let go of stuff that makes us comfortable, even when it isn't life giving. It is especially hard to let go of things that feel uncomfortable when the world around us is turned upside down. But it is worth considering that maybe the things that we think are comfortable aren't actually bringing us real comfort. And today we are reminded, invited, to discern what will. Today we are reminded to realign ourselves and reposition ourselves so that the one who brings us real comfort, the one who brings us real hope, Jesus Christ, is at the centre of our lives again.

I can't help but wonder what happened to those money changers, the next day. I wonder how they felt a month later? I wonder if they found a new spot just outside the temple where the air

was a little fresher, and the sunlight a bit brighter. I wonder if they were able to worry a little less, and trust a little more. I wonder if they had more opportunities to make connections and engage in conversation, more opportunity to make positive change in their community. I wonder if they ever stopped for a moment and thought, “I’m glad he came through here that day, it was not easy, but I’m glad things changed.”

I wonder.

For this part of our Lenten journey we are invited to stand face to face with Jesus and consider what needs to be driven out of our life, what patterns need to be changed to set the stage for new, resurrection life within us. We are being asked to consider our community too. Now that covid has shaken us to the core, what systems might be holding people back and contributing to inequity and struggle? What can we do differently going forward, and how we too might rise together in new life and new vibrancy led by the Spirit? This Lent, as we move into our second year in pandemic, what do we want to pack for the journey, and what do we need to leave behind. What will help us, what will hinder us? Open your heart to the movement of the spirit. Pray.

New life awaits. May we have the courage to make room for it,  
to commit to it.

And may the spirit guide us.

Amen.