

**Christ Episcopal Church**

**2 Emerson Street**

**East Norwalk,**

**Connecticut 06855-1330**

**Third Sunday in Lent (B)**

**March 4, 2018**

**DRAFT**

**8 AM and 10 AM homilies**

**by the Rev. Joe Parrish**

**“When Jesus got angry”**

**The Holy Gospel according to**

## **John 2:13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making 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. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples

remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After 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.

Help us help you bear your cross,  
Lord, for its weight may seem to be  
great, but we know that with your help  
our burden will be light and our yoke  
will be easy. Amen.

Down the street from the church  
where I was a Rector for 24 years was a  
large Roman Catholic school; the  
church itself was about three blocks  
away from the school. Shortly after I

retired from my church I learned that the Roman Catholic Monsignor and all of his clergy staff had been suddenly removed, and a new interim pastor was installed. That was a shock to me, and to others in our church. Later I would learn that the sudden action was possibly taken because there were some irregularities in how the church's school had been recording its income to the Diocese; in the school basement, which was huge, was where there were large weekday Bingo games; it could hold dozens of tables for Bingo; the one time

I happened to walk into that school basement, by mistake, I found well over a hundred women with dozens of Bingo cards on the tables in front of them.

Apparently, the Bingo funds had been used to keep the school running smoothly—many if not most of the school's children were from immigrant families who had very modest incomes, so the church had to subsidize their school tuitions. However, the Diocese was apparently not happy about how the Diocese was not being given its proper share of the school income, and the new

Bishop suddenly decided to change that entire Church administration—several of the clergy were retired, unsalaried, and only lived at the church, but they too were discharged and sent to retirement homes. As I noted, the change was sudden. However, unlike today's lesson about Jesus throwing out the moneychangers, Jesus was not setting up a new program to fund his ministry, but Jesus was angry about how his Heavenly Father's Temple was being desecrated by having been turned into a market. One pastor has noted an

estimate that the High Priest of Jerusalem at the time was benefiting by the commercial endeavors at the Temple to the tune of at least 170 million dollars a year. And when Jesus upset that golden financial stream, Jesus' goose was figuratively cooked, and the High Priest's plans for Jesus' crucifixion were likely then set in motion.

Bible scholar "William Barclay goes into great detail about the historical, religious and political circumstances of the Passover in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus in order to understand why Jesus

became so enraged. Every Jew over nineteen years of age had to pay a significant Temple tax in Jewish currency only, because foreign coins were considered unclean since they had the Emperor as god on them. The Temple tax amounted to about two days' wages, [a little over a hundred US dollars]. Since pilgrims came with foreign coins from all over the world for the Passover, the money changers were no doubt charging exorbitant rates of exchange. In addition, there were merchants in the Temple selling oxen,

sheep, and doves to the pilgrims since it was customary to make a thanksgiving sacrifice for a safe journey. The Temple sellers had a monopoly on this trade because animals bought outside the Temple had to pass their inspection before being sacrificed. Here too there must have been some blatant extortion at the expense of poor pilgrims. What was even worse is that these injustices were being done under the guise of religion.”

LectioAid notes: “The dominant motif in John 2:13-22 is to preview

Jesus as the new focus and understanding of God's presence on earth instead of the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus has angrily swept away the old way of thinking and freed us up with a new understanding that is not limited by human manipulation.

“...the Scriptures record Jesus’ being angry at least 15 times in the Gospel narratives. [Many are] raised to believe that all human anger is sinful.

[However,] the Holy Spirit of God commands us (II Timothy 3:16-17) as believers to put on the “new self” and

“be angry” with a different kind of anger (Ephesians 4:24-26). Anger does have a place in the Christian’s “new” life, not the nasty kind of anger that gets smeared around when protesters write hate mail, not the political kind of anger that produces angry Christians who demonize those on the other side of the aisle, not the ugly kind of anger that causes church split-ism, but a radically different anger that’s beautiful and loving because it ushers in the healing grace of God. Most of us believe that Jesus was humble (Matthew 11:29), yet

we have never paused to realize that humble Jesus showed what it looks like to be angry in a way that pleases God.

Granted, the book of James says that “the anger of man” does not achieve the righteousness of God (James 1:20), yet the very same passage instructs us to be “slow to anger” (James 1:19).

Obviously, being slow to anger suggests that there is an anger we should have.

God never tells us to be slow to commit adultery or to be slow to enjoy our favorite sins. But we are, as already mentioned, commanded to ‘be angry,’

after we put on the ‘new self.’

(Ephesians 4:24, 26).

“...Jesus’ godly anger was never aimed at a prostitute or a tax collector or a political candidate. He targeted His anger at religious phonies who took God’s name in vain by using it to hide their wicked deeds. Jesus’ anger also burned against His very closest followers who willfully hardened their hearts instead of humbling themselves and not taking Him at His word (Mark 16:14). Jesus’ anger is healing, not because it wags judgmental fingers at

unbelievers, but because it re-salts the Church so that we can salt the earth.

(<https://relevantmagazine.com/god/practical-faith/what-righteous-anger-looks>)

“As Christ-followers, we're totally appropriate in getting upset over sin, too. Evils such as abuse, racism, pornography, and child sex trafficking should incense us. But no matter how reprehensible the people or activities we're condemning, we still aren't justified to sin in our responses: ‘When you are angry, do not sin, and be sure to

stop being angry before the end of the day' (Ephesians 4:26, NCV).

“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God' (James 1:19–20). Instead of replying immediately, simply counting to ten before reacting usually leads to much better results in a contentious situation. Then after we take offense, we should take redemptive action. Christians must get involved with organizations working to free children from slavery and volunteer at

shelters working to protect battered women. We must lead the charge against hatred and oppression and cruelty! Ultimately, if our outrage results in restoring people into loving, healing relationships with Jesus, it's righteous anger.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/theology/righteousanger.html>

St. Thomas Aquinas, in the question on anger of his *Summa Theologiae*, quotes the *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaeum*, ‘he that is angry without

cause, shall be in danger; but he that is angry with cause, shall not be in danger: for without anger, teaching will be useless, judgments unstable, crimes unchecked,' and St. Thomas Aquinas concludes saying that 'to be angry is therefore not always an evil.'

“When the Church of England found that one out of every eight of their parish clergy have been assaulted, they began to offer martial arts instruction for all their vicars. In England, being a parish priest is more dangerous than working as a probation officer.”

“Boston transit police were recently trying to figure out how to get rid of the large number of aggressive teenagers who were hanging around city subway stations. They had tried arresting the youth, but they found that did not eliminate the problem. They were still having two or three fights a day in the subway. So, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority pursued a different course of action. They began piping in music from the likes of George Gershwin and John Philip Sousa. The result was immediate—the number of

loitering young people shrunk almost at once.

“There was a mental institution in India that had a rather unusual way of deciding whether the patients were well enough to return to their homes. They would take a patient to a water spigot, place a large pail of water under the faucet, and fill the pail with water. Then, leaving the water running, they would give the patient a spoon and instruct them, ‘Please empty the pail.’ If the person attempted to empty the bucket by scooping the water out with

the spoon without turning the water off, they concluded the person was in need of further treatment. When Jesus went into the temple and faced off against the religious authorities, he was attempting to shut off the spigot. Jesus realized that the only way to correct the religious errors among the masses was first to correct the religious errors at the source, among the leaders.”

We are called to follow the example of our Lord and Savior. Let us do so boldly, but with great respect for his intentional loving kindness. Amen.

## Description:

Anger is often frowned upon by church folk, but Jesus as our example shows us that at times we are to foreswear the practices of those who profane religion and try to degrade God's work on earth.

Tags:

Barclay, James, St. Thomas Aquinas,  
anger, righteous, God, Jesus, Christ,  
church, Temple, High Priest, Jerusalem,  
taxes, money, changers, cattle, sheep,  
doves, tables, overturned, LectionAid,  
Boston, Massachusetts, India, mental,  
institution, subway, police, transit,  
loving, kindness, England, probation,  
officer, abuse, racism, trafficking,  
Bishop, Roman, Catholic, retired,  
clergy, Bingo, school, Elizabeth, New  
Jersey

**St. Stephen's Episcopal ProCathedral**

**35 S. Franklin Street**

**Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania 18701**

**The Third Sunday in Lent (B)**

**March 8, 2015**

**DRAFT**

**A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish**

**“Who is the Jesus that we know?”**

**The Holy Gospel according to**

**John 2:13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near,  
and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the

temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making 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. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can

you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After 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.

Help us help you bear your cross,  
Lord, for its weight may seem to be  
great, but we know that with your help  
our burden will be light and our yoke  
will be easy. Amen.

Who is the Jesus that we know? Is  
he a backwoods carpenter who simply  
became famous? Is he an amazing  
healer who was greatly sought after? Is  
he a great story teller? Is he a divine  
person who was above it all? Is he a  
sacrificial lamb who forgives us our  
sins? Was he a lowly teacher who was

able to inspire many? Or was he a severe task master who simply would not allow the profaning of God's temple?

Why do we follow the Jesus we say we know?

Our Creed, which we will recite in a few moments will remind us again that we believe in Jesus Christ, "Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary." In other words, we affirm the

very human nature of Jesus, that although he made all things, he still became human just as we are human.

In today's gospel lesson, Jesus said he would 'raise up this temple in three days', meaning he would rise to life as the resurrected Lord three days after he was crucified. Jesus is calling his very self, his body, the temple of God. And in like manner, our own bodies are temples of God. What we do in and to them is vitally important. Do we sell and trade our bodies, our lives, our spirits? Do we exchange our holy lives

as Christians for something that is less than holy? Do we somehow profane the bodies in which we live? And if so, are we not under the watchful eye of God who will purge us of our waywardness?

How do we treat our own human temples made by God, given to us by God? Are we possibly acting in ways that would have Christ purge us as he did the Temple of Jerusalem?

It is a surely a struggle during Lent to find ways to keep our bodily temples pure and holy, even if we don't much attend to them so well during the rest of

the year. We as Americans typically eat and drink far too much; we indulge our appetites both physically and spiritually. Maybe we pollute our consciences by what we watch on television, in the movies, elsewhere. I find that if I watch violent films, even if they are PG, my conscience becomes a bit numbed to the horrors of that are now visiting many cities around our world. And even reading about the violence one human inflicts on another can taint our consciences. Yesterday it was Mali, last month it was Copenhagen, and before

that it was France, England, and the United States. It is not so difficult to become immune to the immensity of human violence that is stalking the human race at the present time— yesterday in Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, you name it. Violent situations abound in our news. And the gore gets deeper and deeper.

What should be our response as Christians? Should we just justify violence, or should we abhor it? And is just talking about the horrors of violence enough?

For example, many advocate against the possession of automatic firing guns—they were banned for many years in the US, but once the ban was lifted, the numbers of violent crimes committed in the US using automatic guns began to skyrocket. But any efforts again to put any controls at all on them have been blocked by powerful lobbying groups in Washington. Even in our own recent Diocesan Convention, those who advocated for a control of these lethal weapons of mass destruction were talked down, and one comment I

heard there was that we as Episcopalians cannot advocate for peace since peace is really a secular issue, not a religious issue. But aren't we followers of the Prince of Peace? Or is Peace only an afterthought for our church? Are we being lured by the violence of others to think that maybe peace is not our calling, that we too are simply part of the 'violent generation'?

Yet, right here in our gospel lesson for today, Jesus is seen acting violently, whipping those who were profaning the Jerusalem Temple. How does his

violence compare with what we continue to hear in our nation and in the world? Would Jesus also have us use weapons of mass destruction? Did Jesus himself use weapons of mass destruction? Or is a whip, just a whip? Can we in any way skew this gospel in such a way to say that Jesus is for automatic guns? Clearly that is absurd. Jesus in no manner or form is advocating for automatic weapons. His singular attention is to cast out those who were profaners of the most holy Temple of his time, the Temple of

Jerusalem. But was he not also pointing us precisely to the limitation of the force he used? Were his violent actions not directed to the taking of any life, nor towards the maiming of any human person? There in fact is no indication that his whip even touched anyone.

Was it not instead possibly the threatened switch of the parent whose child does not understand talk? Is any child really immune to corporal punishment by their parents? Or are parents to be just talkers rather than doers in this time and age? Is Jesus not

instead showing us the limitation of any human punishment?

I can remember being threatened by a spanking with a belt as a child, but the only violent thing that happened to me that I can still recall is a repeated powerful slapping of my little hand by a wooden ruler wielded by my Second Grade teacher because I could not see the blackboard; I needed glasses to see; the advantage to the violence that happened to me was that I finally did get fitted with glasses, but it took humiliation and the sharp pain of my

little hand to bring that about. It was definitely unjustifiable violence, but it was what we had to tolerate as seven-year olds in my school in my day and age. I also still recoil in my inmost being from the memory of my Sixth Grade teacher who repeatedly paddled with a heavy wooden paddle one of my classmates, well over many dozens of days. Such violence by teachers of the young has now been severely condemned by our society, but how many Roman Catholic children felt the bite of physical pain inflicted by a nun

who was their teacher? Many. Many. I have heard of this violence from a number of adults who went to Roman Catholic schools. Overarching excessive force by those teachers was possibly somehow justified by a total misreading of today's Gospel lesson about adults acting completely irresponsibly in God's Temple. In no manner would Jesus have turned a whip or any other instrument of physical harm onto a child. Bring the little ones to me, Jesus said, for such are the citizens of heaven.

The use of switches or belts or rulers or any other physical weapon against a child is abhorrent, I contend, and most child rearing experts today will agree. If a parent wants to hurt their own hand, and greatly moderate what a tiny body can feel as pain, that is about the only possibly slightly justifiable use of force against a child, and even that is very regrettable. But how many of us have been kicked or slapped or hit or otherwise abused by a parent or a teacher? I dare say, many.

“Spare the rod and spoil the child” is oftentimes quoted as a Biblical phrase from the Old Testament book of Proverbs; it is *not in the Bible* but was actually a saying penned in 1663 by English satirist, Samuel Butler. In addition, the New Testament in no way condones such actions against a child. Instead, ‘Bring the children to me,’ Jesus tells us. “Spare the rod and spoil the child” is a bygone violent phrase for a bygone violent misinterpreting Old Testament generation, but also mine, and perhaps yours as well. But the

shepherd's rod was never used to punish or reprimand the sheep; the rod was only used to guide the sheep gently, to keep them from danger, never to hit the sheep. No wonder my generation is called the silent generation, for we were silent in accepting what society in our time deemed as acceptable violence against children, but our silent acceptance of unjustifiable personal violence against us as children has turned into a resolve for us that the next generations we have any guidance for will not abuse children, or anyone else.

Yet, even I as a priest have very recently been threatened by bodily violence in church, and not by a homeless person. It is a habit for some that is not easily broken. Anger brings out the worse in people. Angry people lose control, and they don't even realize they have lost control, especially when they think they can control another human being by violent threats and gestures. I suppose it is because they were [quote] "raised that way" [unquote]. But to curtail the violent tendencies of the human race, we need to call violence to the attention

of all, and others need to call our own violence to our attention. Very few, if any, saints can say they are true pacifists. But all saints are called to abhor violence. It is our Christian calling. In the political arena, violence is tolerated, it is inflicted on others, but in the end, any violence we inflict on others will eventually be inflicted upon us. So, we are to beware of violence, as humans, as a society, as a country, and as a world. For the violence we show to others will simply perpetuate the

violence we abhor but witness today and tomorrow in the news.

As followers of Christ, the showing of his wielded whip to the Temple tax collectors and his overturning of the tables of the sellers of doves in the Temple of God shows us just how far we can ever go against another human being, ever.

Peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.