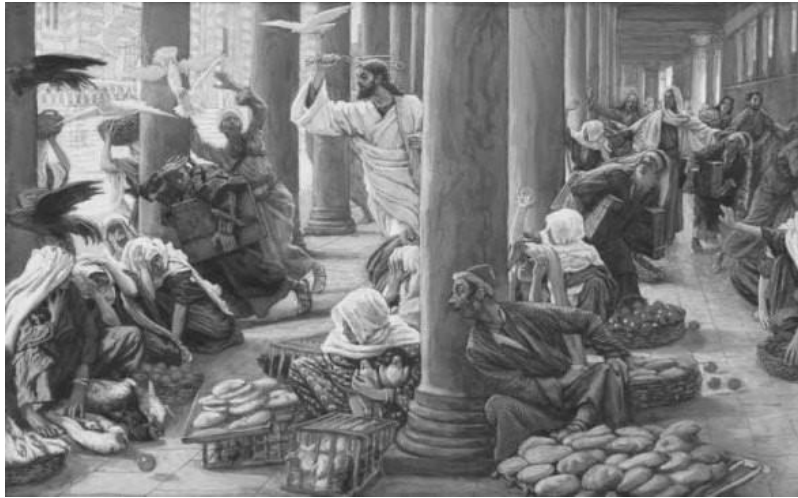


## TURNING THE TABLES



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 19**

<sup>1</sup>The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup>Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. <sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; <sup>4</sup>yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup>which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. <sup>6</sup>Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup>the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup>the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. <sup>10</sup>More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup>Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. <sup>12</sup>But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. <sup>13</sup>Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup>Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

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

#### **(A video of this passage was shown to the congregation.)**

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the tem-

ple of his body. <sup>22</sup>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.

## **This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



### **TURNING THE TABLES**

How does that scene make you feel? Were you surprised to see how Jesus reacted to the money changers and those selling the animals for sacrifice?

Jesus was clearly very angry and deeply upset about the oppression of the poor, especially within the bounds of the Holy Temple.

But there was another message here. This passage ends with Jesus challenging the Jewish leaders to understand that he is the presence of God, the new and improved holy temple of the Lord.

But as Jesus is saying these things he knows they won't completely understand until he is resurrected, if even then.

### **CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE**

**In this cleansing of the temple, as it is often called, Jesus is shaking up the world as they know it. He is showing his power and protesting against not only the abusive Roman government but now he is focusing on the way the Jewish leaders in the temple have become greedy, power hungry, and seem to have lost their sense of how sacred the Holy Temple is meant to be.**

In this passage from John, Jesus reacts to the way they are treating the temple as if it is a marketplace rather than a holy place. So he decides to reveal that he himself is the holy temple of God and when they destroy him he will be built back up in 3 days.

### **A DIFFERENT EMPHASIS**

In the "Synoptic gospels," those that are in sync with each other, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, have a different emphasis. In the cleansing of the temple stories in the synoptic gospels, the focus is on Christ's reaction to the corruption among the merchants in the temple. He is angry about the way

people are being cheated out of their hard earned money. They are told the temple will not accept their offerings and sacrifices unless they change their Roman money into shekels, and the only animals they are allowed to sacrifice in the temple are animals that they purchase there on the temple grounds.

The merchants are being oppressive and corrupt, especially to the poor people who have walked for many days to worship and offer their sacrifices at the temple. If they can't afford the exchange rate for the price of the animals they must leave feeling unforgiven by God.

Imagine if we required you to visit a money changer at our entry door to exchange your dollars into special Church of the Roses money. That would be your only way to present your offerings to God. The people of that time thought they had no choice, and giving their offering and sacrifices to God was a very important ritual to complete in those days.

### **POOR WOMEN**

For example, according to Leviticus 12:6-8, after an Israelite woman had given birth, she was to bring a sacrifice to the temple, preferably a sheep. But if she was poor, she could take two doves or two pigeons for the sacrifice, since birds were much less expensive, one for a burnt offering and one for a sin offering. Because of greed, the market for birds rose so much that not even the poorer women of the community could afford them. Jesus was protesting injustice towards poor women when he turned the tables.

Have you ever been so upset about the ways of authorities or ruling powers that you wanted to turn the tables on them? Maybe it was during Vietnam or in the sixties?

### **BONHOEFFER: WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?**

In a blog titled *Philosophy Behind Bars*, the author reviews the moral philosophy and ethical conduct in the book *Ethics*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous German pastor theologian who stood up to

Hitler when the Jews were being persecuted. He lived forty short years but pastors still lead by his example today.

He said that when faced with a moral dilemma one must ask one simple question. What would Jesus do? Do you remember WWJD bracelets? He



inspired them!

Bonhoeffer states that the premise of ethical behavior is based on how the reality of our world and the reality of God are reconciled in the reality of Christ. When we live within the reality of Christ, it is to live as a responsible person.

Bonhoeffer states that there are only two guidelines to determining the will of God in any situation. The first, considering the need of one's neighbor and the second following the model of Jesus Christ. If one is able to manifest these two guidelines, then one is capable of experiencing the reality of Christ which in turn results in living a responsible life.

To live an ethical and responsible life one must strive to be a selfless person and imitate the model set by Jesus of Nazareth. A selfless person, who is morally responsible, does not hesitate out of fear or shelter themselves from conflict.

**Bonhoeffer deeply believed that failing to act when injustice is being done condones evil. And he believed in the existence of inherent good within, that God is good and all of God's creation begins life as good. Tapping into one's inherent good is the key to living a moral life because it encourages humans to live selflessly.**

Imagine a universe where all of its inhabitants were always focusing on demonstrating their inherent good! There would be no sin. There would be no crime. There would be no injustice. Overall, the world would be a much more industrious and peaceful place to live for everyone. But sadly, the peaceful kingdom of God is not completed yet. Sin, crime, and injustice are all widespread. Inherent good combats all forms of sin when we put others before ourselves. Jesus provides the perfect model for how to selflessly live our lives.

## **LENTEN SEASON**

During this Lenten season of repentance and confession, it is the perfect time to repent and confess that we are aware of injustices existing at this very moment in time and we are sitting back and not doing much about them.

Lent is the season to be authentic about the lack of genuine effort we put towards combating the injustices around us. We might do a little something like donate food for the hungry, or give a little money to the poor. But often we don't persist in opposing these injustices beyond what is easy and comfortable. Yet Jesus calls us to take risks, to give until it hurts, to stand up beside those being discriminated against, to use our power to advocate for the vulnerable and to shout out injustice when it might not be the popular thing to do, but it is the ethical way.

## **TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT ABUSE**

Ashley Judd was the first celebrity to turn the tables on Harvey Weinstein for sexually abusing women in Hollywood. This kicked off the TimesUp movement of finally telling the truth about abuse in Hollywood. She said on National Public Radio last week that the power to speak out came from wanting to finally do the right thing for the little girl inside her that did not receive justice ever since the first time she was molested at age seven. At that time she told two adults about the molestation. But they just dismissed her report as a "misinterpretation" of what the "nice old man" did to her.

She said to not report what Weinstein did to her would have caused a loss of her integrity. And she does not care what reporting him does to her career because to report his abuse is the right, honest, and good thing to do. She tapped into her "inherent

good” and made an ethical decision that inspired others to do the same.

## **THE CONFESSING CHURCH**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave other clergy the courage to oppose Hitler and start what they called the Confessing Church. It arose in opposition to the efforts to unify all Protestant churches into a single pro-Nazi church in World War II Germany.

Jesus didn't just turn over one table. He turned over many tables and set free the animals to be sacrificed. He shouted at the top of his lungs how they were turning the temple into a den of thieves.

If more people followed Christ's example and acted against injustice with energy and persistence, the amount of evil existing in this world would dwindle drastically.

## **YOU CAN DO SOMETHING**

You can do something to oppose injustice and that something does not insist that you physically turn over tables. Each of us, for example, can help provide earth justice by cleaning up the oceans. I have found a new way to do this by promoting 4ocean, an organization started by two surfers. With the purchase these bracelets, a pound of trash is cleaned up by a team of ocean cleaning boats.

To help refugee families, go to the Church World Service website. They are the best support in the United States for refugee families here and in other countries.

To help rebuild affordable housing in Santa Rosa, you can volunteer with our Church and World Committee as we host Habitat for Humanity here on April 28th.

To provide better gun safety, send an email on the topic to the White House or call them. Go to [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov).

Let's all be brave enough to follow Christ's lead and start "turning the tables" where they need to be turned so that all of God's children can come closer to enjoying life, liberty and justice as God intended from the beginning.

**(Reference: Bonhoeffer article from the blog at: <https://philosophybehindbars.wordpress.com/2017/01/25/dietrich-bonhoeffer/>)**

### **Benediction:**

**"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil; God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."**

**"One act of obedience (to God) is worth a hundred sermons."**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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