

Anger

5 3 15

My text may be found in John 2 and verse 16:

“Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace !”

What makes you angry ? Really angry ? Is it the unspeakable acts of terrorism perpetrated according to the perpetrators as Jihad against the Infidel ? Is it the fact that the masked executioner, Jihadi John, was once a normal school boy at a North West London Academy and had studied at a University in London ? Is it the number of appalling cases of sexual abuse of children and of vulnerable adults by celebrities such as Jimmy Saville ? Is it simply the way that other folk drive their cars so carelessly, so thoughtlessly, as to give you genuine grief on our crowded roads ? Whatever makes you angry, I bet, at one time or another, you will have lost your temper. Anger may be one of the seven deadly sins but our capacity to be angry is one of the signs we are alive and open to feel real indignation.

John’s account of the ‘Cleansing of the Temple’ by Jesus takes place at the start of his gospel whereas the Synoptics locate it at the start of the last week of Jesus’ life in Jerusalem. The gospel writers may disagree when the event happened but all four present a picture of Jesus, full of righteous indignation, overturning the tables of the money-changers and driving out the sellers of animals to be sacrificed.

So why was Jesus so angry ? Simply because of the scale and of the significance of the abuse of the Temple in Jerusalem – supposed to be bethel, the house of God – his Father’s house. The Temple was the place where the presence of God might be felt. In the centre, the Holy of Holies. Immediately outside, the Court of Priests. Beyond that, the Court of Men; then the Court of Women; and lastly, on the edge, the Court of Gentiles. The one place where the uncircumcised might come closest to meeting the God of Abraham had been turned into a marketplace and a thoroughfare, a short-cut. It was noisy and busy and the last place on earth where a stranger, an alien in the land, might in prayerful stillness encounter God. No wonder Jesus was angry ! Who wouldn’t be angry at such abuse ?

My question at the start was ‘What makes you angry ?’ Let me leave you with this final thought – when is it wrong ***not*** to feel a sense of righteous indignation – ***not*** to be genuinely angry for the right reason ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

