

Tuesday in Holy Week
Mk 11.15-19
30 March 2010
Church of the Holy Communion
Fr. Patrick S. Allen

We come this Tuesday evening of Holy Week to a uniquely disturbing scene – it will not be the last disturbing scene – but, as I say, it is uniquely so. And it is so because in it our Lord – “gentle Jesus, meek and mild” as we like him to be and wish he would remain – is not the one suffering violence, but is instead the one inflicting violence.

Now, to be sure, none of the Gospels, and all four report this incident, tells us that our Lord actually injured anyone, but we are told that “he *drove* them out,” those money changers and temple vendors.

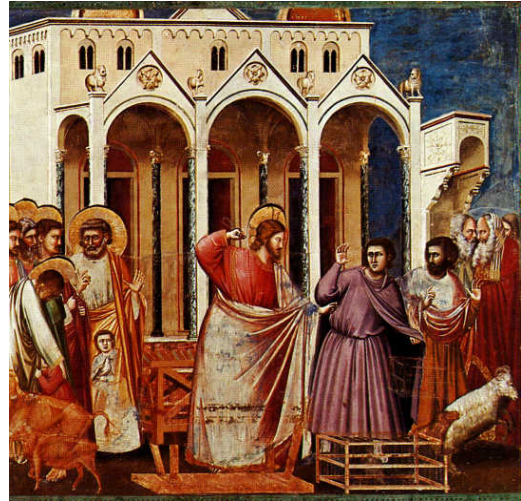
So quickly we forget that when John the Baptist first introduced the Christ of God to the world, he said that this Christ’s, this Messiah’s, this *Lamb of God’s* ‘winnowing fork is in hand, and he will clear his threshing floor.’ⁱ The Christ of God comes to make distinctions; to say, “*this*, and not *that*”; to gather wheat, but to burn chaff.

But we – maybe I should just say *I* – would so much prefer that he didn’t. Or, at least if distinctions must be made, he might make them along the lines that I suggest. Perhaps not the “false gospel of indiscriminate inclusivity” that Bishop Lawrence has decried, so much as the equally false gospel of the inclusion of the similarly discriminating.

But here is Jesus, eyes wide, a whip of cords in his hand, consumed with zeal for the House of the Lord. Zeal, of course, is love aroused to anger – but still, and powerfully, love. E.H. Gifford described this aspect of love when he said, “The more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the liar, the drunkard, the traitor.”ⁱⁱ

Jesus in the Temple is neither narcissistic nor merely cranky, but zealously loving. And like a surgeon, he will wound in order to heal. To desire God’s presence, his love, must then be to desire this wounding. So Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple wrote, “I pray God to do for me, or in me, or *to* me, whatever will have the result that I may believe.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Last night we considered the mystery of the anointing of Jesus with costly oil by Mary of Bethany, an anointing given in anticipation of our Lord’s loving, self-giving death for our sake. And Fr. Sanderson in his meditation left us with the question, “How do we respond in the face of such lavish and extravagant love?” And so this Tuesday night of Holy Week, we are confronted by Jesus, a whip of cords in his hands, and we must ask ourselves: What is it in our lives, or in our life together, that must go in order that the Lord may come in? What robbers of God’s love must be driven out? What must I allow – what must I *beg* – the Lord to do for me, or in me, or to me, so that the temple of our heart may become a house of prayer?



ⁱ Mt 3.12; Patrick Henry Reardon makes the connection between these episodes.

ⁱⁱ Quoted in “Preaching Hell in a Tolerant Age,” Tim Keller (Keller in turn relying on Becky Pippert, *Hope Has Its Reasons*).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Readings in St. John’s Gospel @ Jn 11.16.*