
Fr. Gordon's Sermon from last Sunday March 7, 2021 '3rd Sunday in Lent' ~

"One Disruptive Lord"

Lord, your people are gathered, feed them with your word.

This morning's account of Jesus cleansing the temple is really quite amazing because it stands in contrast to our popular notions of Jesus' character. This is not the picture of a gentle, soft-spoken Jesus calmly confronting the religious establishment with his authoritative teaching and divine wisdom. Rather, Jesus appears with His sleeves rolled up ready for a fight.

So why is Jesus so disruptive? Well, the temple had become an exclusive enterprise ruled by the current governing elite. It had distanced itself from the people of God. Yes, the temple welcomed everyone, but Jesus saw a new divine in-dwelling, a place which put God first, and the temple was failing at this.

We might ask, is this really our Lord Jesus? He is overturning tables and disrupting the religious life of the people. This account of Jesus' aggressive behavior doesn't mesh too well with our cherished views of him as a teacher, a healer, a comforter and gentle shepherd, and after all, our Lord would never do anything that is disruptive, would He?

I remember my own call to serve many years ago, I remember thinking nothing was going to interrupt my red-blooded English youth lifestyle, rally driving in my *Mini Cooper*, racing motorcycles, and I won't give any further information on that subject, but some time later, interrupted it was . . . We have to understand the power of Christ, as in our first reading from 1 Corinthians this morning.

Jesus is far more confrontational than we often imagine; think about it for a few minutes, it is a characteristic of His work in the world. Jesus is constantly disrupting things, whether it be on the corporate level of, say, a religious establishment, or on the personal level of an individual's life.

I personally, had no desire to spend time studying and being in church, however, we all know the result of that disruption of my life. And what about the lives of his disciples? Did Jesus not cause a disruption in their lives?

Fishermen who were successful enough to have boats and hired hands left their livelihoods behind to follow Jesus in the far more difficult and unsettling work of fishing for people.

Similarly an affluent tax collector walked away from a lucrative business and the security it gave him in order to journey with the One who, unlike even foxes and birds of the air, had nowhere to lay His head (Mark 2:13-14; Matthew 8:20). Likewise, Jesus



disrupted the lives of countless other followers. He had that kind of disruptive influence upon people's lives.

Jesus still has that kind of disruptive influence on people's lives today, doesn't He? Our presence here this morning bears witness to some degree of Christ's disruptive work in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

During this time of COVID, career choices and goals have been altered and reshaped. Family relationships and lifestyles have been interrupted. Decisions on faithfulness and obedience have collided with cultural values and expectations.

I suspect all of us could point to more than a few costs and disruptions that have accompanied our responses of faith in following Jesus. This morning we are told that Jesus steps into the temple swinging a whip. He drives the animals out, overturns tables, and spills the whole system onto the temple floor. He commands the money changers to depart and to take all these things away. The people there retaliate and demand a sign, they don't understand what the fuss is all about. Jesus answers, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up!"*

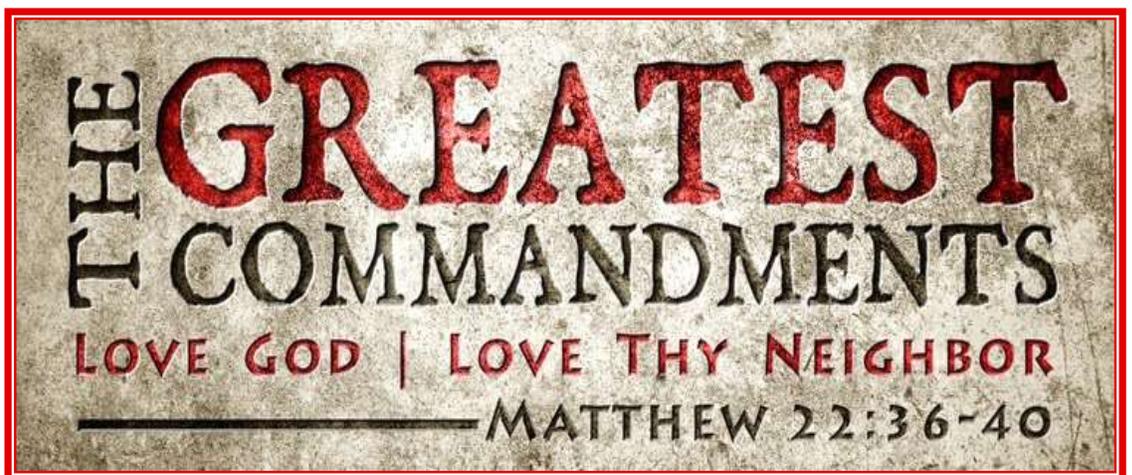
Can you imagine the barrage of responses from the religious people to such a seemingly preposterous statement? We might ask, what in the world is Jesus talking about? Is He talking about tearing down a religious establishment that has lost its way by accommodating itself to the people? Does He mean to destroy a religious program that has become confused about its responsibility to God and a place of transformation in the community?

Is He talking about pulling down systems of self-identification, personal arenas from which one's life receives more meaning and direction than from a vital communion with the living God? We know of course, He is talking about Himself who, after dying on the cross, would be raised on the third day, who will then be the point of connection between the God of Heaven and the people on Earth, who will be the new and everlasting "temple" marking God's relationship with His people.

Indeed, after Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, His disciples saw very clearly that He had been speaking of the temple of his body, the One who was, and is, and always will be. In Christ Jesus they encountered the One who calls us by name, disrupting our lives and beckoning us to follow. In walking with Him we may know him and so know ourselves, that we may love and serve God and one another as God intends.

Living appropriately as God's own children who love him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and love

our neighbors as ourselves. My friend's, the reality is we belong to one disruptive Lord. And this Lord of ours is bent on overturning anything and everything that hinders us from appropriate devotion and service to God the Father and to one another.



This disruptive Lord of ours does not passively abandon people and institutions which he has called into being and commissioned with a task. No, our loving Lord boldly confronts that which is inappropriate within us and among us for the purpose of making us clean, whole and faithful.

So, in these Lenten days, and always, may we continue praising our loving and merciful God for stirring us to faithfulness, for bestowing on us the gifts of the Spirit, and may we praise Him for disturbing our complacent lives through Jesus, disruptively working to make us to be more closely the people and the community we were created to be.

Thanks be to God! **AMEN.**

Fr. Gordon+
