

Quest – 7th March

Dear Quest member,

Today's Quest reading is in St John's Gospel and has two parts: The first part is the story of Jesus overturning the tables of the money-changers and the people selling things in the Temple; and the second is his claim to "destroy the Temple and build it in three days".

But to begin: Let us each take a pebble for the pebble prayers. It doesn't have to be a pebble, you could hold a favourite object.

As usual I will leave the last prayer blank so that you can add something of your own.

"Let us pray for teachers and children, some of whom will be returning to school for the first time in many weeks.

"Let us give thanks for the signs of Spring all around us: snowdrops have been out for weeks and now the first brave daffodils are showing their colour. The birds are singing too.

"Let us pray for all Church leaders: For those who have organised the continuing services during the lockdown and for those who now have to take difficult decisions in the coming weeks and months about returning to worship in Church.

".....

"Lord Jesus, hold us and all these people in your hands as we hold these pebbles in our hands. Keep them safe. Amen"

The first part of the Gospel reading is about the Temple in Jerusalem. Jews believed that it was the place on earth that was closest to heaven. So it was very holy.

Over the years the Temple courtyard had become a place, conveniently, where merchants sold animals to be offered to God, then other shopkeepers realised that this was a good place to have a market stall because lots of people visited the Temple every day.

Here is the story in the version from the Roots material, the Gospel of John, chapter 2 verses 13 to 22:

Remember that day really well. It was nearly Passover. ☼ The Temple courts were crowded. There were men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. The next thing we knew, Jesus was making a whip out of cords, and he began to drive the animals out of the Temple.



Cows and sheep were charging about, and doves were flying everywhere as he let them out of their cages. He scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He began shouting, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a marketplace!' ☼

'As I look back now, I remember that the ancient prophets had written, 'Zeal for God's house will overwhelm me.' We could see it with our own eyes. And then the Jews there demanded of him, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' And Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it in three days.' They laughed. 'It's taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?!' But after the resurrection, the "three days" began to make sense! ☼

John 2.13-22

☼ See *Share the Word*.

Jesus sees that all the buying and selling has become more important in the Temple than worshipping God and he wades in! He turns over the tables and takes a whip to drive the people who are just there to make money out of the Temple.

Of course it is important that our church, St Helen's, has its priorities right. We must not put too much importance on selling things or making the Church a tourist attraction.

But Jesus also asks the same question about ourselves. What is really important for us... In our worship and in our lives outside church. You will recognise that I like singing in Church and am very interested in church music. However I have to be careful that I am not just going to Church for the music. The music has to be just part of my whole relationship with God. What is important to you?

1. What do you need to be you?
2. What is the first thing you need each day?
3. What do you need most at school?
4. What do you need most at home?
5. What do you need most in your friendships?
6. What do you need most at church?

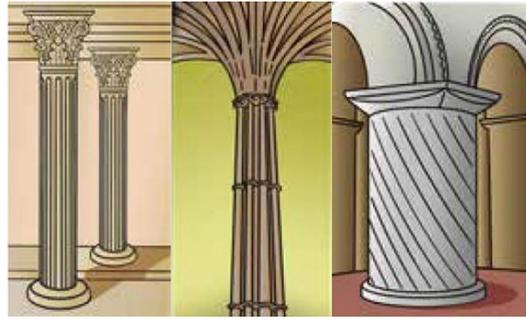
You may find it helpful to think about the different kinds of pillars that you find in churches:

Some pillars are clearly there to support the roof.

Some pillars are more decorative.

And some pillars really get in the way.

What sort of “pillar of the Church” are we?



But there is a second part to the Gospel reading. Jesus says, “Destroy this Temple and I will raise it in three days” You will remember that in his trial before Pilate this is one of the accusations of his blasphemy. But, of course, Jesus is not talking about the physical Temple but of his own body which was destroyed (crucified) on Good Friday but rose again on Easter Day. He is also making the point that we are closest to heaven, not when we are in the Temple but when we are close to Jesus.

Help us to recognise what is important in our lives.

May God bless us all. Amen.

Norman