

Cleansing the Temple (2)

Scripture Reading — Isaiah 56:6-8

“My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.”
Matthew 21:13 —

Religious huckstering wasn't the only reason the temple needed to be cleansed. Another reason had to do with God's mission to the world. You see, there were four courts in the temple. The outer court was where the Gentiles—the non-Jews—could come to worship God. Next was the court of women, and then the court of men. The inmost court was where the priests alone could enter to offer sacrifices.

Jesus' righteous anger at the merchants in the temple was heightened by the fact that they had chosen to do business in the court of the Gentiles. How could anyone from other nations pray and worship God while surrounded by the bleating of sheep and the shouting of buyers and sellers?

We can understand the impact of Jesus' complaint when we look at the actual passage he quoted from Isaiah. In Isaiah 56:7 God says, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” The presence of sellers and money changers made worship impossible for Gentiles—and that angered Jesus.

The Jews in charge of temple matters needed to remember that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:32). We must remember that too. Neither our actions nor our traditions should stand in the way of others who seek to worship God.

Prayer

Lord, we acknowledge that sometimes our traditions and closed-minded ways have shut the doors of our churches to others. Forgive us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Devotion topics: [Seasons](#), [Easter](#)

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