

Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 2:13-22

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Events teach. Often the learning comes after the event. Jesus teaches with elements that have immediate impact as well as lingering meaning. And they usually land well outside the expected. So, with Passover looming, Jesus goes into the busy temple and proceeds to clean house. "Take these things out of here!" he demands of the money changers, the animal merchants – even those who sold doves. Then he announces: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." A temple that took 46 years to build? Could he mean the temple God has been building since the beginning of time? What "things" need to be removed from our own personal temples?

Theme: Cleaning the Temple

Before Class: You will need copies of the Scripture or bibles for each person.

Beginning: In today's passage, we will meet Jesus in prophetic witness. He has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. The transformation from the old order is beginning to break through.

Creating the Setting: The Scripture appointed for today occurs near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus, acting on the authority he has from God, names what needs to be named: that which interferes with the life-giving spirit of God.

Opening Prayer: *Dear God, open our hearts to hear the message that comes to us, now, in the passage we will work with today. Thank you for your trust in us to do this work. Amen.*

The Scripture (John 2:13-22): invite someone to read the passage or invite one person to read Jesus and the another person to read the rest of the passage.

Questions:

- First of all, what were all those animals and money changers doing in the temple? (Animal sacrifice was a required part of the ritual. And the temple tax had to be paid in Jewish money, not Roman coins.)
- What do we do with Jesus' response? (This is not a temper tantrum, but a righteous response to leaders who had turned holy work into a profit-making business. He named what needed to be named and honored his own grief over what he was seeing.)
- What do we think "Zeal for your house will consume me." means? (Psalm 69.9 is the source of the quote -- a passage all would have been familiar with. It could also be freely translated as: "What you are doing with my house, my church, breaks my heart.") You may want to consider what things might break Jesus heart as he looks at our church, aware that we might be surprised.

- How does Jesus answer the question put to him by the Jewish leaders? (Notice his answer is, as usual, not an answer to their question but Jesus' insistence on keeping the focus where it is appropriate.)
- We can imagine what the Jewish leaders meant by "temple." What do we think Jesus means by "temple?" (The place we meet God, our own bodies.)
- If we consider our own lives to be holy temples, what cattle, sheep, and money changers are cluttering up our temples? What things are we getting bogged down with in our lives in this particular community that is keeping us from doing the corporate work we have been given to do?

Getting Closure: If things that keep us from doing the work given us to do have been identified, ask where this dialogue should be shared. To whom should you talk to begin the dialogue.

Closing Prayer: *Pray the Collect for Third Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer, p. 218.*

John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of money changes and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him: "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews then said: “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days? “But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.