

Cleansing That Temple

When Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out the merchants and money changers he did something that must be done again and again. We go back into the temple, set up our tables after Jesus has gone, and do the very same things we did before, unless we actually hear and respond to him as Lord and God.

The church of all Christians must once again become a place of peace and understanding. There are too many aberrations of the faith who may advocate violence or disagreement with others as a way of life. This is not what Jesus came to accomplish. He wants to turn the tables on all that is hurtful and painful and take us back to the practice and power of prayer.

The establishment of Jesus' day was letting the church become a business and condoning stealing from people as a necessary evil to obtain an animal for sacrifice. Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers because they were charging unfair interest. He turned the tables on the merchants in the temple courts because they had forgotten that God had built the temple for prayer.

Cleansing the temple of God, the church in today's language, means praying for our neighbors, for our country and world. It means returning to the practice of prayer as a unifying and loving influence and doing things which help other people rather than hurt them.

This takes the overturning of sinful practices, such as promoting certain political views or becoming comfortable with business principles which guide the operation of the church.

The church is not a business or a political organization. It is a house of prayer and worship. We go forth from the church only in love and caring to make this world a better place and to tell the good news of God reconciling us to one another and to him through Jesus Christ.

The church is far above any government and perspective and practice. The fact that governments choose to intervene in the church from time to time does not mean that God has given them the authority. It just means that they think, wrongly, that they have it.

The hallmark of the church has always been, and must continue to be, a place of worship and love. If we fall away to become a den of robbers and thieves by taking advantage of others, the tables of misconception must be turned over once again by Jesus, not by us, so that we can stand together in unity and understanding side by side.

This overturning of tables includes those who think that being part of the church is an option for Christians. "To gather with God's people in united adoration of the father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer." ~ Martin Luther

People wonder how we can make our society better and rediscover the core values which many have forgotten in their quest for meaning? Come to church. Every Sunday. Not just any church, but one where the tables of sin and dishonesty have been overturned, and the main emphasis is on prayer and worship of the holy and almighty God. So much so that God's holiness becomes a part of us and shows a way forward for all who seek it.

There is room in almost every church, for many of those who once went are not there. They stop or move because of human emotions or the temptation to see something else as more important on the Sabbath. We don't bring our children to learn of peace, love, and a divine God who is able to do anything, and wonder why they turn to sin and selfishness when they grow up.

Prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian. Prayer at its very core is about reconciliation to God and others. It is conversation with God about how God can speak to us in grace and love, and how we can speak and act toward others in the same way.

Pastor, preacher, elder, deacon, teacher, member in the church, do you continually lift up those with whom you disagree in prayer? Jesus said to love our enemies and pray for them. The point, I am sure, is for God to overturn tables of sin, to change us and them so that there is no longer an us and them, but we.

Paul said, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?"

Well, is he so in you that he overflows to worship and devotion and understanding? Or is he in you so little that you lean on petty and human decision-making?

The choice is clear. Jesus is ready to turn the tables so that you will see the temple, and you yourself, as a house of prayer.

Do you know what happened after Jesus cleansed the temple and turned the tables on the sinners and authorities there? Healing. The thing our church, our country, our world, needs more than any other thing.

I pledge to love and pray for healing for all of us, dear reader. Will you do the same for others?