

Tuesday Holy week 2009

What happened next....?

'Come Thomas, don't dilly dally, I warned you we would return to the Temple, and so we are, now, are you with me? Or against me'

'With you, Jesus, even if we have to follow your footsteps to our own deaths'

'Thomas, why the miserable face? Did you not eat well last night? Sleep well? Drink well?'

'Maybe that's the problem Peter, maybe Thomas drank too well' said James, shielding his eyes from the sun, 'maybe we all did'

'Or maybe Thomas thinks more carefully than the rest of you...what we are doing *is* dangerous', John,

'Indeed, what we are doing is dangerous, I need to know if you, all of you, are with me or against me'

'with you, Jesus' they all muttered,

'All the way?'

'all the way'

'And who has a sore head after last night, James?'

James hung his head and groaned gently as did one or two of the others.

'Sometimes we indulge too much, when what we need is gentle, nourishing, refreshment.

Fig, anyone?'

'But figs are out of season - see the leaves are out, but there's no fruit'

'No fruit? Then cursed be the tree that bears no fruit'

'Cursed be all of us and our sore heads if he's in this mood' Judas

muttered as they moved along, more quietly and questioningly towards Jerusalem, back to the city, that yesterday Jesus had entered with praises and Hosanna's sounding loud and clear.

Loud and clear in the ears of all those who had been present for Passover, including the Roman soldiers and the High Priests.

'So why are we going back, Jesus? You said that they all understood, that they had worked out what was going on, finally they had recognised who you are'

'Yes, John'

'So now you're going to storm the temple and take your place? Now you're going to take your throne?'

'Oh Judas, you are so eager, too eager, the Passover hasn't yet happened. Can't you see? Haven't you understood?'

'Obviously not' and Judas slunk back.

'It was late yesterday. There wasn't time to do much more than look around, but I did not like what I saw. Things need to change, and I think we need to begin to make changes today'

'Jesus?'

'What is the temple for, my friends'

'Sacrifices' 'Prayer' various responses

'My house shall be called a house of prayer' John quoted the prophet Isaiah,

And Jesus continued

'for all the world to share. But what did we see in the court of the Gentiles?'

'Money changers' 'sacrificial doves for sale'

'a market place'

‘How can our friends pray, when they are confronted with the dirt and noise of such a market, everyone wanting to take money from someone else’.

‘And did you see? Merchants using the temple courts as a short cut’

‘I did, Andrew, I did. And is that what concerns you the most?’

‘Well, no but..’

‘No. Those who have turned this house of prayer into a den of brigands, are those who should be protecting it, safe guarding it, maintaining it’s sanctity, so that God’s light and love can shine out to all nations, so that all will be able to base their lives upon His hope.

But, instead, by abusing the court of the Gentiles they are not only taking money from those who simply come to worship, but are stripping from it any ounce of holiness that could possibly seep from the ‘holy of holies’ and pollute it. They want to keep God for themselves, but they don’t want me.’

‘You remember the fig tree? What purpose is a fig tree that cannot produce nourishment and refreshment for its creator? What use is a temple, a house of prayer, that actively prevents people from praying?’

This has to be stopped and it has to stop now’,

And Jesus, grasped ropes from the stalls, forming them into a whip, cracking it in the air,
Kicking over the table nearest him, money scattered and clattered over the stone pavement, doves fluttered free, confused flying into the faces of those gathered, trying to find air to fly

‘STOP!
THIS ALL MUST END.
THIS PLACE MUST BE CLEANSED’

Noise, confusions, cries,

And then,

Silence

As the chief priests came out

And stood

And looked

'Is it not written:

My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'?

Silence

'Is it not written?'

More silence

Then a quiet voice, '*your* house?'

'A house of *prayer* but you, YOU, have made it a den of robbers',

The priests remained silent, then slowly, quietly moved away,
muttering to themselves

'*His* house?'

And the traders and money changers stood by helplessly, their
'wares' displayed on the ground for none to buy,

Too aware of the presence of the 12, whenever they thought about
resetting everything,

Too aware of the crowds, no longer interested in buying, or even
saying their prayers,
Only interested in what Jesus had to say.

Seeing afresh the place that should be holy,
should be theirs to worship God in,
and how filthy it had become.

As the day drew to an end, and Jesus led his disciples away, back to the comfort and safety of the home at Bethany,

He said little, murmuring only,
'remember the fig tree'

Lynne Chitty prayer.