

## LENT: A TIME TO JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

**Third Sunday in Lent**  
**March 15, 2009**

**Exodus 20:1-17**

**Psalm 19**

**1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

**John 2:13-22**

### **Overturning the Economy**

Jesus was a man for all seasons. Usually, he is depicted as an itinerant rabbi, preaching, teaching, and performing miracles in the lives of the sick and infirm. This week's Gospel passage shows a completely different side of Jesus as he becomes irate when he witnesses people selling livestock in the Temple. He makes "a whip from cords and drove all the animals out of the Temple ... he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins" (John 2:15, *GNT*).

Did the people think their behavior sacrilegious? Probably not. If truth be told, they were no more "enterprising" and "greedy" than the people who are now making headlines in our local newspapers. The vendors would provide worshipers with animals for sacrifices at higher than normal prices. It was one way they could make a fast shekel. And, the money changers would charge a nice little commission for changing money from foreign to local currency so those who used their services could easily pay the temple tax. It was quite a bustling free market system.

It is possible that Jesus did not care so much about the profit margin of the sellers, but he did care that the Temple, and all that it stood for, was being desecrated. And, if we do an instant replay, we'll see that it is not those who were being thrown out that argued, but the Jewish authorities who demanded, "What miracle can you perform to show us that you have the right to do this?" (John 1:18b, *GNT*)

One would think they'd recognize that he was on their side. But isn't that typical of some of our churches today? We have gotten so comfortable with encroaching on God's property, with defiling his temple (both our bodies and the church) that we dare to repudiate anyone who questions our actions.

In the economy of God's kingdom, things are indeed overturned. That is why "The scripture says, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and set aside the understanding of scholars'" (1 Corinthians 1:19, *GNT*). Earthly wisdom stands in the way of truly understanding what God requires of us, for it makes us think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. Obedience to God's commands (Exodus 17:1-10), however, puts us in right standing with God and gives us the wisdom that comes from above. It is small wonder, then, that Jesus' detractors assumed he referred to the physical building when he

challenged them, saying, “Tear down this Temple, and in three days I will build it again” (John 2:19, *GNT*) when he spoke of his death and resurrection.

As we journey through the Lenten season, it is a good time to take stock of our lives. It’s a time to drive out all those things which encumber us; a time to overturn those habits that hinder us from declaring, “My devotion to your house, O God, burns in me like a fire” (John 2:17b, *GNT*). Be challenged to subscribe to God’s economy where “The laws of the LORD are right, and those who obey them are happy” (Psalm 19.8a, *GNT*).

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Canada –** With prayers for forming strategic partnerships; for engaging with the Scriptures the next generation, First Nations; emerging urban cultures, and diverse ethnic groups; for ministry teams distributing resources at the 2010 Winter Olympics; and with prayers for ICAP which provides technology support for 650 projects in Bible translation and publishing worldwide, and for the funding of additional staff for complex translation mandates such as those in the Asia Pacific, and for Bible work in **Bermuda; The United States –** With thanksgiving for the opportunity to reach people in their time of need; with prayers for programs of crisis care and advocacy, for youth at risk, soldiers and aural learners, for five indigenous language translations projects; also for various fundraising activities and that donors will engage in Scripture-based programs; and with prayers for the new Bible Society leadership and the staff that God will prepare them for the task facing them.

**Activity Corner:** “Kingdom Economy”

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2” x 11” construction paper or cardboard; coins; pens or pencils; tape.

Encourage family members to read John 2:13-17 with you. Write out verse 17b at the top of the construction paper or cardboard. (“My devotion to your house, O God, burns in me like a fire.”) Invite everyone to save their loose change (nickels, dimes, and quarters) for one week. At the end of the week, tape the coins horizontally to the cardboard and deliver them to your church as an offering for missions. Discuss ways in which you can show devotion to Jesus by taking care of your place of worship. If you wish, include a photo or drawing of your place of worship on the paper or cardboard.

