



*Will we allow Jesus to disrupt our lives?*



#### **Main Point:**

Is the picture of Jesus we store in our heart, one characterised *only* by his meek and compassionate nature? If so, the way Jesus responded in today's Gospel reading will challenge us.

Today, Jesus is fiercely passionate about confronting the religious establishment.

Will we let Jesus enter into our hearts and cause a disturbance?

Only then will we become like Jesus, zealous for *our* Father's dwelling place to be a place of worship and prayer.



#### **Intro |**

What do you think of the table-turning, animal-driving, whip-carrying Jesus?

Did today's scene from the Gospel, make you feel uncomfortable?

Did it shake and unsettle your picture of Jesus?

I know that most of you have heard this story before. But I wonder how many have seen it depicted visually.

When we 'see' it happening we can more easily imagine what it would have been like to be there that day, when Jesus seemed to totally lose his temper.

Have you ever wondered what set him off that day.

I mean was Jesus just having an angry day?

If we consider why Jesus responded the way he did, we may get a clearer picture of his earnest passion to ensure the dwelling place of God's Spirit is kept pure and holy.

**Point 1 | Imagine you were at the temple that day. How would you have responded to Jesus' actions? Would you have tried to stop him or would you have questioned Jesus' authority to behave the way he did?**

Let's step into the passage and imagine that we are one of the people who just happened to have come to the temple that day, to buy our sacrifice, so we can offer it in the temple.

Remember, it is something we do regularly, every week, a little bit like attending church – something that's on our weekly to-do list.

Suddenly, however, out of nowhere, we see this man named Jesus, (who seems to cause a stir wherever he goes), causing an uproar. He's in an angry frenzy waving a whip all around, chasing everyone out of the temple.

There are people running everywhere, birds flying out of cages, sheep and cattle roaming about amongst the crowd. It is chaos!

"Ooooh my", you think "are the religious folk going to hate this! He's messing up the entire place, turning over tables and causing coins to fly everywhere!"

You watch (your mouth gaping open) to see how the religious leaders will respond to this disturbance which Jesus had initiated.

You ask yourself, "What is his problem? Is he upset about the animals? Does he not like the moneychangers? But isn't this what God told his people to do?"

When I was in Sunday School, I thought Jesus was upset about the animals and the moneychangers being in the temple.

However, now I realise that can't be what he's angry at.

Jesus grew up as a faithful Jew going to the temple. The animals, the moneychangers, would have been there every Sabbath.

So, it's unlikely he just showed up and said, "Today, I've decided the animals and money changers shouldn't be here."

They'd always been there. That's how the system worked. It was business as usual for them to be there.

Business as usual meant changing Roman coins to temple coins, purchasing an animal, and offering a sacrifice.

Its just what you did. It's what everyone did.

And that, I think, is what the issue is.

It is the 'business as usual' attitude that reeked in the air, that was the issue.

I think Jesus went to the temple that day for one purpose and with one intention; to cause a major disturbance, an uproar, ... to overturn the 'business as usual' attitude that was making the whole place stink.

There are times when we need the tables of our life overturned, and the animals thrown out. It's just so easy to fall into the trap of settling into a 'business as usual' attitude.

Afterall that was what Jesus identified as the main problem with the religious establishment.

He said, they were hypocrites, they honoured God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him. (Matthew 15:7-9)

They were just going through the motions of worship and serving God, operating with a 'business as usual' attitude, yet their hearts were miles away from where their bodies and minds were.

I can remember many times in my life, when I discovered I'd fallen into a 'business as usual' rut – when I became aware I'm just going through the motions, but my heart and soul are just not in it.

This 'business as usual' attitude can infiltrate anywhere: our friendships, our marriages, our parenting (or grandparenting), our work ... even – as the case was in today's passage - our worship in church.

It's when the habits and routines we create cause us to sleepwalk through our lives.

It's like we're on auto-pilot, and the rhythms of our life become so automated, we forget why we're doing them in the first place.

We go through the motions. We show up. But our hearts are not really there.

When we feel like this, we are operating with a 'business as usual' attitude.

**Point 2 | It is because of Jesus' passion and zeal for his church to become a living and powerful spiritual temple, that he is prepared to confront and challenge any 'business as usual' attitude in our lives.**

And that's the attitude that Jesus had to disrupt, disturb and clear out.

God's house, the temple, was designed to be the dwelling place for God on earth. But they had made it into a marketplace, a place of doing business, a place where worldly and earthly things were given priority, rather than on the worship of God.

And what Jesus did then, he will also do now – if we let him.

That's how passionate Jesus is to ensure the dwelling place of God is pure and holy.

And let's not forget where God's dwelling place on earth is.

It's not in any church building. Rather, God's Spirit is in our hearts.

That's why when the authorities demanded that Jesus explain what he was doing, he told them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19)

He was pointing them to the truth that God was building a new temple for His Spirit to dwell in – one not made with human hands.

Remember, at Jesus crucifixion the Holy Spirit left the Holy of holies in the temple (that was when the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom). Then, He began His journey into the hearts of the newly born disciples.

This new spiritual temple that God is building, with living stones – that's you and I - doesn't operate in the rut of 'business as usual' – it operates in the power of the Spirit, so that it glows with God's goodness and glory in the world.

**Point 3 | Have we hung a 'do not disturb' sign on our hearts? Or, are we willing to let Jesus clean up and disrupt our lives?**

So, let's not allow a 'business as usual' attitude to stay in our lives. If we do so, it is like we've hung a 'do not disturb' sign on the door of our hearts.

Jesus will respect that request.

But if we want to be pure and holy members of his body, we need to fling open the door and say, "yes, Lord, I'm willing to let you disrupt my settled life."

The more we step into the Gospels, reading them as though we are participants in what's going on, the more we see Jesus constantly disrupting and disturbing people's lives.

In his book, *The Jesus I never knew*, Philip Yancy wrote, "The Jesus I got to know while reading the Gospels was nothing like the Jesus I learned about in Sunday School. In some ways he is more comforting; in some ways he is more terrifying."

Is Jesus sometimes terrifying to you?

Will we let him confront our comforts? Express his frustrations at our stubbornness?

Are we ready to allow the true Jesus, who is full of passion, zeal and even anger into our lives?

Remember, this Jesus will confront evil.

This Jesus will confront apathy and laziness.

This Jesus will challenge us and stir us to pray more, to meditate on God's Word more, to wake up earlier in the morning to spend time in God's presence.

So, let me finish by asking, how would you have responded if you saw Jesus whipping up a storm, like he did in today's reading?

Would you have called him aside and said, "Jesus! Stop it, you're causing a scene!"

Or would you have responded by asking Jesus, "Lord, give me the same zeal as you have for *our* Father's dwelling place".