

# COLORFUL SCRIPTURE

March 3, 2024

---

## Worship is More than Going Through the Motions

Based on Ex 20:1-17; 1 Cor 1:22-25; Jn 2:13-25

By Marianne Couture

Sheep bleating. Oxen bellowing. Doves cooing. The outer courtyard of the temple smells of animal dung. Added to this are the shouts of sellers and money changers. This is what Jesus finds as he reaches the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. The outer courtyard looks more like an animal market than the entrance to a house of prayer.

When Jesus sees the money-changing and the selling of animals, he makes a whip out of rope cords. He drives the sellers out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He spills the coins of the moneychangers. To those selling doves, Jesus says, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."

Why? It is Passover time when thousands of people come to the temple to pray and offer sacrifices to God to fulfill the Jewish law. To buy animals needed for sacrifice and to pay the temple tax, people go to the moneychangers to exchange Roman coins for temple coins.

The animals are slaughtered and offered as sacrifices to God. Jesus finds the sellers charging prices far above the fair price, and the moneychangers exchanging people's money for temple cash and charging high fees for the exchange – cheating the people.

With a condemning, blazing look in his eyes, Jesus is so firm in what he said and did that the temple leaders don't dare stop him. They ask Jesus what right he has to do this. Jesus answers, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The leaders assume Jesus is referring to the temple in Jerusalem. They say it took 46 years to build the temple and it can't be rebuilt in just three days.

John's Gospel explains the temple Jesus is talking about is his body; Jesus will die on the cross and in three days will rise from the dead. We who know that our own bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit are not surprised by Jesus' answer.

Jesus was attempting to help the temple leaders – and us – understand that worship means more than going through outward motions. It means looking inward to grow spiritually – opening our hearts to God and seeking his will, forgetting self and bringing love, justice, peace and mercy to others.

# COLORFUL SCRIPTURE

March 3, 2024

---

