

## Time for God – Take 2

**Purpose:** To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service and in particular with the Congregational Bible passage.

## Week beginning Sunday 4 March 2018 Turning world right side up

**Pray** that God would help us to stand up for truth and righteousness, against injustice and to know how and when to take action. Pray that we would not sit idly by in the face of wrongdoing.

**Read** Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). John 2: 13-22.

**Background** John shapes his gospel to highlight the plans and purposes of God in Jesus' life probably, it is fair to say, in a thematic way. Some of the old testament prophets got themselves into difficulties with the authorities because they openly challenged abuses and injustices. Isaiah, for example, was particularly outspoken against the misuse of religion for material gain – seeing it as utterly offensive to God. Some would have seen Jesus' intervention against the temple traders as being offensive to God whereas Jesus clearly saw the offence the other way.

### Possible questions/points to consider

1. We thought quite a bit about perspectives in the service. How can we learn to look outside ourselves and begin to appreciate other people's perspectives/viewpoints? What tends to happen when people are unable to do this? How do we get a hold of God's perspective/viewpoint? What tends to happen when we don't?
2. Gentle Jesus meek and mild – what is right/wrong with that traditional picture of Jesus? How does this intervention in the temple change or add to that image of Jesus? Why was Jesus angry at the trading in the temple? What do you imagine would have been the response of the traders? Of the religious authorities? And why?
3. How do we take account of the biblical injunctions to obey the authorities with the need to oppose injustice etc? How do we ensure that we act for the right reasons? To what extent are we ready for the consequences of intervening? What about God's view of failure to act against injustice?
4. Plainly Jesus felt that the very material and money making enterprises (and backhanders) in the Temple were an affront to God. What sort of thing might be regarded as an affront to God in religious circles in our day and age? Are we sensitive enough to see these as wrongs? How ready are we to do something about them? If we are not, what should we do differently?
5. It's always been done this way – you can't change it. Sometimes things that began for the best of motives become distorted and end up being counter productive. What does that say about the need for ongoing review and reflection in the life and work of the Church? How good are we at this? How might things be improved?
6. Standing up for the truth, even when we correctly identify the issues and the response, is hard and can come with consequences. What were the consequences for Jesus? What might the range of consequences be for us? How far do these determine the action we take?
7. Think about anything else that arises from the passage or from the service.

**Prayer** Lord, help us not to be afraid of standing up for the truth even when it is costly. Help us to seek out your will and look to you for the wisdom and faith to do the right thing. Make us more open to understand where people are coming from and to do our utmost to let people see why we think and act as we do. May we seek above all else to do your will in love. Amen.