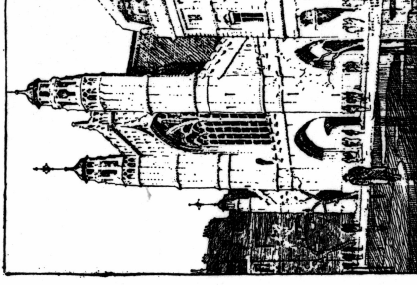




SELECTED SERMONS
AT
HOLY TRINITY
SLOANE SQUARE



15 MARCH 2009

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
THE REVd ROB GILLION
RECTOR

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A Sermon for the
Third Sunday of Lent

15 March 2009

The Revd Rob Gillion
Rector

rich and poor, young and old – those divisions.

Jesus has set us free to worship God and we can not be truly at peace until every barrier between humanity and God has been destroyed.

As the body of Christ we need to get upset – until that vision of worship set forth in the Book of Revelations a vision in which people from every nation, every class, every conceivable part of humanity are together. Until what we do in church is what is done in heaven. When we have our feet on the ground and our hearts in heaven!

1 Corinthians 1.18-25 / John 2.13-22

Deep Humanity & God's Authority

“Feet on the ground and his heart in heaven.” That’s my description of Jesus in the Gospel account of his arrival in Jerusalem. It was Passover time – there is a rhythm of going down to the lake of Galilee and up to Jerusalem which occurs three time in the first half of the gospel. It is as though the lake with its deep water and Jerusalem with its temple, represents the two levels which are interacting – Jesus his deep humanity, and God’s authority.

Arriving in Jerusalem he goes to the temple and finds it crowded with tradesmen making money out of the pilgrims. He makes a whip and drives them out which naturally causes a stir. For surely to be a Christian we must behave like a ‘civilised’ human being or ‘a decent respectable person’. The shock must have been great. But the Pharisees were decent, respectable people, the Church is perceived by many as a haven of out-dated, stifling respectability. For Christianity is more than making people civilised, decent or respectable. If in any doubt – just recall this incident in the temple – not very civilised.

It was shocking to the Jewish religious authorities who witnessed the scene – Jesus adding insult to injury.

'Destroy this temple in three days I will raise it up', imagining he referred to the building in which they were standing – but of course he was speaking of himself in Cross and Resurrection.

We speak of Jesus' Passion – meaning his suffering. I see in Jesus a passionate man battling with "injustice". That's what provoked him to display this "righteous indignation." He wanted to cleanse the Temple – Jesus saw the commercialisation of the sacred. He was also responding to the injustice of extortion – the moneychangers were taking advantage.

But for me I suggest Jesus was angry about a much larger issue – that issue is access to God. Jesus was angry because people were setting up barriers to keep others from worshipping God – I am slightly uneasy about these gates into the sanctuary – and I prefer them to be flung open and stay open all day.

What angered Jesus and angers me is when as a church we spend so much time putting up barriers – insisting people jump through hoops. Babies not baptised unless parents attend church for six months before. Marriage couples not allowed to marry in church because of this or that or the other.

What angered Jesus is the religious leaders – in league with the commercial influences – stood between those

seeking to worship their God. They were gate-keeper who by their practices were limiting who could and couldn't come before God. And that made Jesus mad!

After all the point of his coming, of his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection – was to tear down the barriers between humanity and God. He came to destroy the walls created by sin – and here he saw such a wall – one built in the name of faith. And so Jesus acted. He turned the tables and sent the rest away. He purged those standing between humanity and God so that he alone would stand between God and his children. Not as a barrier but a bridge.

What took place then was confirmed on the day of his death. At the moment Jesus died on the Cross the curtain that was used to separate the Holy of holies – the dwelling place of God – was torn in two. Ripped from top to bottom, from heaven to earth. Jesus destroyed the barrier between us and God, securing forever our access to God.

What does this mean for us! Well first we thank God for what Jesus has done – and that nothing stands between us and God – except the sin we fail to confess.

He invites us to get passionate and angry (but sin not) over the barriers placed in the way particularly with vulnerable people. Can we get angry over racial, ethnic,