

Palm Sunday - 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' [Matt 21:9]

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem is a profound moment. He enters the temple in the throes of religious festival and then casts out the peddlers and merchants who have turned it into a commercial enterprise. Religion has become a way of earning an easy living – devotion has become an opportunity to inflate the prices of the necessary paraphernalia of ritual and tradition.

The Court of the Gentiles had been turned into a religious market place. The outer court, that for many would be the only part of the temple into which they were admitted, had ceased to be their place of prayer. God had been displaced in the name of religion; exploitation and opportunism had been clothed with respectability and expedience.

Jesus' response is dramatic and decisive, in a matter of moments tables are upturned, wares are sent flying and the entire scene is thrown into disarray. As our Lenten journey enters its final stage, we are reminded that the road to Calvary is not a place for easy religion.

What are the sounds that herald God's coming?
Songs of praise and refrains of Hosanna?
Or the clattering of upturned tables, jangling of scattered coins
And the shouts and protests of angry traders?

For in the midst of this disrupted marketplace
You call all people to reclaim the rhythms of prayerfulness
Exposing the selfish opportunism
That is falsely veiled in expediency and necessity

Preserve us from a faith, where we become the temple traders
Laying out our stalls of religion and routine
Crowding out the gateways to your presence with our own pre-occupations
Leaving those who seek you outside of our cluttered sacred courts.

What public squares are we called to reclaim;
As places where your word can once again resound?
What tables are we called to over-turn;
That have too readily become the seats of exploitation?

What facades of respectability are we called to strip away?
What light might we shed on injustice?
Whose empires are we called to topple,
As the Redeemer's presence is again made known?

Help us become true Beacons of Hope;
Where the radiance of your presence burns undiminished;
Where thresholds of gracious welcome are clearly illumined;
And the light of truth exposes evil's harmful endeavours.