

How Jesus Would Deal With Modern-Day Merchandisers

“And they came to Jerusalem. Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who sold and bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry any vessel through the temple” (Mark 11:15-16).

Following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the previous day, Jesus entered the temple area and simply “looked around at everything” (v. 11). Now, we know the reason why. Had He taken action then to purge the temple of the money changers, the crowd with Him would have pitched in and a riot would have ensued. Jesus didn’t want mob action to accomplish His purposes.

We know from John’s gospel that Jesus first cleansed the temple of the merchandisers at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13–22). Later, His disciples remembered His statement at the time: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” Now, three years later in this second cleansing of the temple, Jesus’ zeal remained undiminished.

How true it is that over time many go back to their old ways. Revivals come and then they ebb. Persons once “on fire” for the Lord seem passionless years later.

In the intervening three years, the temple had gone back to its old ways. The court of the Gentiles was massive, spreading out over the equivalent of almost 15 football fields. The merchandise was located on the south side, where pilgrims and worshippers entered, following their ritual cleaning in the many baths outside.

From all nations they came to worship God—Jew and Gentile alike. The sellers weren’t there to worship but to profit. All

money had to be exchanged for the special temple currency, the half-shekel tax. For the poor who couldn't afford a lamb, doves were sold to those who wanted to sacrifice. The temple sellers were profit-driven, not prophet-driven.

The strength of Jesus' personality is seen in that He stopped the whole vast enterprise single-handedly. He didn't do it courteously, either. He didn't give the money changers time to bag their currency. Instead, He overturned their tables, scattering coins everywhere.

While Jesus never struck a person, He didn't have the same regard for property. He permitted demons to enter the swine at Gerasa (5:13), destroying a herd of 2,000 and all the income that went with it. He cursed a fig tree because it had no fruit (11:14). Here, He crippled the temple economy—at least for a day.

In His action, Jesus leaves an example for His followers. Those who serve in leadership capacity must resist the temptation to see people as profit centers. We must be careful never to make money the main thing but to use funds as the servant of ministry.

Jesus' attitude toward "snake-charming" pulpit personalities who promise you riches if you'll send them money would bring the same response from Him as His attack on the money changers. Such activity makes Him angry.

Jesus clearly didn't condemn support for the temple since He paid the half-shekel tax Himself (Matt. 17:27), and approved the widow who gave all she had to the temple treasury (Luke 21:1-4). Rather, Jesus opposed solicitation of money for selfish enrichment, and He stands against any abusive way that might be employed to raise money for His cause today.

A Prayer: Lord Jesus, may my passion for You be as strong when I am older as when I was younger. Cleanse my life from anything that hinders the purity of my worship and service to

You.

Excerpted from Dr. Wood's book, Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available from Vital Resources.

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