

Home Group study: week beginning 25th May 2020

Jesus Christ: Dangerous Revolutionary

3: Fierce Intention

Have you ever been determined to achieve something? What did you have to do, and what did you have to give up, to achieve it? Was it worth the effort?

Read: John 2: 12-22

Why did Jesus react in this extreme way to what he saw? What dangers did he face as he rampaged about the place?

Discovery

John tells this story at breakneck speed, giving the impression it was all over in a moment. It's as if Jesus has walked in, seen what has gone on, something has 'snapped' inside him and he's gone berserk. The book Beautiful Outlaw, by John Eldredge (on which this sermon series is based) suggests we slow the story down and think about it. Where, for instance, has Jesus got the whip from (v15)? How long might it take to drive panic-stricken sheep and cattle out of the temple courts? What does he do about the doves (v16)? Rather than risking harming them he's making the effort to get them out safely: is that the action of a crazed man in a rage?

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: 26: 'In your anger do not sin'. OK, that was written after Jesus' death and resurrection, but 'all Scripture is God-breathed' (2 Timothy 3: 16) so Jesus would have lived by the principle behind that verse. Imagine if something was going on in a British cathedral that you disapproved of, and you went in with a whip and caused mayhem: could you do so without sinning? What reaction might you expect from the cathedral clergy and staff, not to mention the local constabulary? Would they see you as sinless? So how did Jesus not sin in this display of anger? (*Our thoughts about the fact that this incident is not as fast-paced as the telling of it in John 2 might imply may have some bearing on this question.*)

Jesus is, not surprisingly, confronted by the 'powers that be' in the Temple, in v18. It would seem that Jesus had given them the perfect excuse to arrest him. Yet they are, apparently, open to the possibility that he might have some authority to act as he had. Think about why they might ask him about his authority instead of just clapping him in irons.

Understanding

Jesus' answer to the Jews confronting him (v19) must have seemed very enigmatic to them, and in v20 they appear very unconvinced by it. John kindly explains it for us in v21, and in v22 we're told the disciples would later have a 'lightbulb moment' where everything made sense to them. As we're thinking of Jesus being 'fiercely intentional', what does his answer tell us about his intention? What does the fact that Jesus was able to act in such a provocative way in the Temple, the very centre of the hierarchy opposed to his ministry, tell us of the fierceness of his intention?

Application

In his sermon Malcolm gave us three applications.

1. **We need to recognise why Jesus came into the world.** What, then, were the reasons Jesus came into the world?
2. **He gives us an example to follow.** Ask the Holy Spirit to clothe us with zeal and the determination to press on. One simple thing may be to determine every day to spend time with God, so that it's not an 'optional extra' that we fit in when we can (or even *if* we can).
3. **Thank Jesus** that he was never distracted in his determination to do whatever it took to fulfil His father's purpose: which was driven by God's passion for us. And in so doing, remember just how fierce that determination — and therefore his passion for each of us — really was.