

John 2: 13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

What makes you angry? Is your anger justified? What was happening in the Temple Courts was not pleasing to Jesus. The Temple Courts was a place where Gentiles could gather for worship yet this space had been turned into a market place; a place of noise and activity, a place of trade and profiteering.

I remember in 2001 I was in China for a charity walk. After our days of trekking a number of us had paid to stay on for a few extra days to explore more of the country. Whilst in Beijing we decided we would make our way to the Mausoleum of Chairman Mao. On the way into the mausoleum there was a stall selling flowers; if you bought flowers you placed them on a rack in the entranceway before proceeding further into the building. Every so often the doors were closed and the flowers removed no doubt to find their way back to the stall for reselling. As you left the building there were people selling trinkets such as cigarette lighters with the image of Chairman Mao upon them.

The "profiteering" around the place where the body of the founder of Communism in China lay seemed somewhat strange. Yet people have always been willing to try anything to make a few extra pounds.

In the Temple Courtyards what was being sold were items that were to be used in the Temple for sacrifices. It would not have been easy to walk the many miles to Jerusalem from some distant area with a sheep or dove for sacrifice; surely the traders were being of service to the worshippers? So they may have been but what was of importance to them was their profit not the teaching of the prophets.

We have just come to the end of FairTrade Fortnight when campaigners have been encouraging people and communities to look carefully at what they buy and the difference it makes to people around the world. This year there has been a focus upon Climate Change for the poorest of the world who produce the least carbon emissions are those hit hardest as a result of Climate Change. Those who live with the least healthcare provisions are those who will be last in the queue for a vaccine?

Does this make us angry? What do we do about it? I do not suggest making whips and going round supermarkets but going around supermarkets and looking for the Fairtrade logo may be a place to start.

Whenever we spend money, or do not spend it, we have an impact upon the lives of others in our world. The choices we make make a difference to the lives of many others. Does my spending help the poor eat or the wealthy have more luxury? The poor get thinner or the wealthy get fatter?