

Third Sunday in Lent

In the temple he found...cattle, sheep, doves, money changers. He drove them out.

—John 2:14–15 NRSV adapted

Explore

three chairs; table;
one-by-three inch
strips of blue, green,
and yellow paper;
dove cutouts or
pictures of doves—
two per student;
envelopes for paper
strips

“Money Changers in the Temple” Game

Directions:

In this game, the object is for the worshipers to get into the temple after paying the temple tax and buying a sacrificial dove. Temple tax can only be paid in yellow currency.

Setting: The dove seller is seated in front of the money changer. The money changer is seated at a table. No one can pass until a tax is paid. The dove inspector is behind the money changer. No one can enter the temple until the dove is approved.

Players: One money changer, one dove seller, and one dove inspector. Other students will be the worshipers.

Materials: Money can be made from one-by-three inch strips of blue, green, and yellow paper. Collect pictures of a dove or buy dove cutouts from a teacher supply store, two for each person. (The dove seller holds half and the inspector holds half.)

Worshipers get an envelope containing “money.” Prepare envelopes in advance so some can get into the temple and some cannot. Suggested composition for getting in: fourteen blue and two green; six blue and four green; twenty blue and five green. For not getting in: four blue and two green or fifteen blue and four green.

The money changer has exchange rates at hand, but they are not clearly posted.

4 blues+1 green (money changer keeps 1 blue as profit)

9 blues+1 yellow (money changer keeps 1 blue as profit)

1 green+3 blues (money changer keeps 1 blue as profit)

2 greens and 1 blue+1 yellow (money changer keeps 1 blue as profit)

Doves sell for five blues outside the temple. The dove seller can occasionally add a profit, if it suits him or her.

The inspector will not approve doves purchased outside the temple. The inspector needs to insist that doves purchased outside the temple are not perfect. The inspector will charge two greens for a perfect dove. (Don’t let it go on for more than fifteen minutes.) Debrief by asking how those who didn’t get into the temple felt. How did those who were able to enter the temple feel? What observations can be made about the dove seller, the money changer, and the inspector?

Extract

Bible

John 2:13–16

An Angry Jesus

Jesus continued on his journey to the cross. Along the way, he continued to confront injustice present in his society. Read John 2:13–16. Can you imagine an angry Jesus? Jesus taught his disciples to be peacemakers, to be kind to each other, to love their enemies. Yet in this scripture, Jesus is making quite a scene in the temple—of all places. What got him so upset? What was he trying to say to the people present and to us today?

This event happened at Passover, when every Jewish man within twenty miles of Jerusalem was obligated to go to the temple. Of course, Jews from all over the known world wanted to spend Passover in Jerusalem, so the whole city was packed with people from many nations. Every Jew had to pay a temple tax to support the sacrifices at the temple. The tax had to be paid in Jewish coins, and people from the other countries had to have their cash converted to Galilean shekels. Jewish law allowed for some profit for the money changers. In the game, think about your money changer. Was this person honest? Discuss merits of money changing, how it might be handled differently.

Bible

John 2:13–16

Pilgrims to the temple often wanted to offer a sacrifice as part of their worship. An animal was killed, sometimes burned, as an offering to God. The sacrifice had to be something that belonged to the worshiper, like a domestic animal or food baked from flour (not just wheat but a product that took effort to make). The sacrifice was for many purposes: forgiveness from sin, communing with God, and expressing thanks to God. The main objective of the sacrifice was to help the worshiper become closer to God.

As disciples, we will encounter injustice as Jesus did. How will we respond?

Experience

Closer to God

Jesus came to bring us to a closer relationship with God. One place to worship God was in the temple, or in present day in our churches. Ask: Are there things in our worship service or church building that do not welcome people or do not put God first? Discuss the worship service offered by your congregation. Ask: Could some of these things be considered forms of injustice by some people—things that prevent them from worshipping? What suggestions could be offered?

paper, pens or pencils

Take a walk around your building. Make notes of what can be improved on the grounds, in the signs to direct people to the church, and in the care of the facility (windows, doors, gutters). Tour the inside of the building. What will welcome a newcomer? What directs people to worship God? In the worship service, are all people treated fairly? Are people happy to see children, teens, adults, and the elderly? Are there forms of injustice here?

Expand

Based on the tour of your facility, what can you do to welcome all worshipers to God's house? Discuss cleaning projects, being greeters at the door, visiting with new people, supporting church community projects, and others. Choose one project for the class as a whole. Then plan, set a date, and get clearance from the person in charge. On the paper provided, ask students to respond individually by answering this question: What sacrifices can I make to help confront injustice in holy places?

paper, pens or pencils

Lectionary scriptures—Exodus 20:1–17; Psalm 19; I Corinthians 1:18–25; John 2:13–20