Sermon: **Stop making my Father’s house a market-place** (John 2.16)

We have a Greeting Cards stand, out most Sundays, with cards for sale from the old Affordables Shop – is this terribly wrong? TEXT. Is our Parish Garage Sale or selling Cheese Rolls wrong? Is it the exchange of money that is so bad? If so, should we have an offering, or entrance fees for special events, or have a gold coin donation for Friday Club, or Word for Today? Or is it noise level? If so, does this count out our Morning Teas, Parish Lunches, Fellowship/Study Groups, Committee Meetings, Choir and Music Team?

I guess some churches would see things this way, but this might easily miss the point Jesus was making.

John 2: Jesus going to Passover. Why did he go into the Temple? Was he Sightseeing? Making a yearly offering? Going for worship?

The Temple had concentric areas, with the more inner circles for more limited groups (Gentiles, female Jews, male Jews, Priests/High Priest). The market was in the Gentile area so Jews could buy before entering holier parts. Thus hard for Gentiles to worship and Jesus was cross about this. TEXT.

We understand this & agree with Jesus. Some in his day would also have agreed. But it was not so clear cut.

1. The Law demanded sacrifices, ordinary Jews could not get animals/birds pure enough for sacrifice.
2. Roman money was tainted, so had to removed from the Temple to keep it pure.
3. Money changers enabled special money to be within the Temple, used for gifts and purchasing.
4. Where else could the market have been? Romans would not have allowed it outside the Temple.
5. “God set the Law, this is how it can happen in practice; sorry Gentiles, but this is how it is!”

What becomes obvious to us, is not so obvious after all.

According to Matthew 5.17 (**I have not come to abolish [the Law or the Prophets] but to fulfil them**). Was Jesus fulfilling the Law here? (ie giving the Law its true purpose?)
What was its true purpose? Surely to bring God and God’s people closer together in a trusting relationship?

And was all this commerce, worthy though it was in enabling the sacrificial system to continue, going against that higher and more fundamental purpose? TEXT.

Trouble is that the people of Jesus’ day would have found it hard to see what Jesus saw – same for us?

What do *we* do that goes against God’s purposes? What are the tables that Jesus wants to overturn in our own lives and/or in our church?

[1] It is a shame that most non-church folk would find God in creation more easily than in a church.

[2] Some of our ways of worship (hymns, rambling prayers, formality, all facing the front, having an offering, communion) seem normal to us, but are weird and possibly off-putting to others.

[3] Attitudes towards certain groups like scruffy drunks, bludgers, homosexuals, noisy children.

[4] Barriers for those with some disabilities like those with limited sight or hearing or intelligence.

We declare that God is love. It is our response that matters. This passage from John illustrates how our responses can go wrong. TEXT. Though our issues are quite different, we are not really much better.