

"Live as examples of Christ Jesus"

Devotions for Deacons

Be Prophetic Critics of the Waste,

Title: Injustice and Selfishness in our Society

Scripture: John 2:12-17

Text: Isaiah 42:1-4

“Pray also that you will be filled with courage to overturn tables when you need to.”

This story creates quite a dramatic scene. It is the Sabbath day and the town is emptying into the temple courts. But on this Sabbath, there is more noise, more busyness than usual. People are coming from outside Jerusalem for the Passover. Many do not bring the animals needed for the sacrifice. What better place to buy those animals than right here in the temple courts. Feathers are flying as doves are sold. Sheep are bleating. People step around the cows. For the religious leaders, the most joyful noise, though, is the clinking of coins as money changes hands. They are cashing in on the crowds with their temple market.

Can you imagine Jesus' face as He enters the temple courts? If people recognize authority in His quiet teaching, they must have trembled before His righteous anger. He makes a whip and drives out the animals. He swipes the money from the tables and on to the ground. And then he overturns the tables too. Did the money changers dare to dive after their coins, scattered in the mud? Imagine the confusion! What is going on here?

While Jesus' anger is most certainly about what has been done to God's holy temple, Jesus' actions are also a direct challenge to the religious leaders, who are the spiritual and local civil authority. By overruling them on their own "turf," Jesus is making a powerful statement about their leadership

and the way they govern. Jesus directly challenges their economic exploitation of people, and their social discrimination. Through His ministry, Jesus has shown a completely different way of doing things, of being a society. Every part of Jesus' ministry proclaims this new way: Listen to His words. Watch how He compassionately heals everyone regardless of race, belief, or lifestyle. Feel the powerful expressions of His love. But even while Jesus lives this new way, He also goes right to the source of the problem, the root of the inequity. He does not just "turn the tables" on the religious leaders, He *overturns* the tables. He turns everything upside down.

Deacons, we are called to be critical of waste, selfishness and injustice around us. And our response may take many forms. Often it will be about demonstrating a better way. But it is also important to understand what is going on around you. Not just to see poverty and provide relief, but to try to understand why there is poverty. Jesus brought a powerful and beautiful picture of His Kingdom. But at the same time, He got to the heart of the issue, speaking out against the source of the injustice. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom to bring relief where it is needed, to learn in humility Jesus' better way, and to live out and proclaim justice. Pray also that you will be filled with courage to overturn tables when you need to.