

All 4 of our gospels tell us of Jesus cleansing the Temple – as you can it was a notable event. Imagine if in more normal times Jesus had come here and cleared Bernie and Elsie out of our little piety shop. We'd be talking about it for years after.

And the 4 evangelists did – but they tell the story very differently. Or at least John does. Matthew, Mark and Luke pretty much tell it the same way, and it's presumed they give the more accurate account, historically speaking. Of the Temple cleansed after the entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when welcomed as the Messiah, but turned on by the officials especially because of what happens in the Temple. But when John tells his story it is the raising of Lazarus that seals Jesus fate, and he places the cleansing of the Temple not at the end of Jesus' ministry but at the beginning.

When John tells of the cleansing of the Temple he has more to say than 'it made Temple authorities angry'. By the time John was telling the story, 60 or more years after the event, the Temple was long gone, destroyed by the Romans. And it was clear by then that the Temple was not going to be rebuilt, no way, no how. And by then Christians and Jews had learnt to live without the Temple, and find other ways to be in the presence of God.

By the time John wrote Judaism had redefined itself and begun the journey to being the religion without blood sacrifice, without a Temple, that it is now, centred on prayer at home and prayer in the synagogue. And during that process of doubtless painful and challenging re-definition Judaism had become less tolerant of Jews and their associates who were Christian.

At the same time Christians, who more and more were of gentile stock, were increasingly dismissive of Jews and Judaism.

That tension is heard in John's Gospel and it is not very nice. When John speaks of the Jews many say his words are tinged with prejudice, and it certainly they have encouraged many people to prejudice and been used to justify anti-semitism and the horrors we know have come from that...used by anti-Semites in a way that hopefully John would have been appalled by.

Be that as it may, for John Jesus pretty much replaces old-style Judaism. For he is the fulfilment of everything that Judaism promised – the God who pitches his tent with his people, who lives in covenant with his people.

For Jews the key moment in their relationship with God was the Exodus – out of which comes the Temple, and the annual feast of Passover.

And John says to the Church: Passover – that's Jesus – and in our Gospel today – the Temple, that's Jesus too. To access what Judaism offers, you don't turn to Judaism with its Temple destroyed by the Romans 20 years ago and still rubble, but to Jesus who was killed by the Romans and after 3 days rose again, and lives still. We don't keep Passover celebrating what was hundreds of years ago, but we celebrate Jesus who is the true Passover lamb, whose flesh and blood we eat and drink not so much in memory of things past was but for eternal life. Our Temple *is* Jesus. And everything the old Temple sought to do, what Judaism promised and promises, we find that, and more, in Jesus, in his Body, in the Church, sacrament of the Risen Lord.

John seems to say Jesus replaces Judaism. The Church's teaching nowadays is little more nuanced. In Christ is the fulness of God's revelation and self-gift. But Judaism is not replaced or emptied of its value. Jews are still the first chosen People, our elders in the ways of faith. Their Scriptures are true. They still have their mission in the world.

From our perspective what a precious gift they lack, but at the same time what a wonderful gift they still have to offer the world.

Including those 10 commandments there in the first reading – 10 commandments – 4 about the love of God, and 6 about the love of neighbour. Guidance about what to do and what not to do, if we want to live in communion with God. Whether we are Jews or Christians – this is what we are called to. And as we prepare for Easter we might well use those commandments as an examination of conscience.

Do we avoid those failings that would keep us from God, and keep us from our neighbour? Do we achieve those good things that help us rise to those qualities that are God's and that help us to become ourselves.

There's a phrase in the psalm that reminds of the end result of such good living, such godly living: it's what gives light to the eyes. We maybe all know people who are dead in their eyes. Maybe we also know those whose eyes shine with love and tenderness and goodness. Maybe we are or can be one of them.

Because of Christ our light. Light that shines even in the darkness of the world and guides us to life, Christ who longs to live in us and with us to help others to life.

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