



Bible Study for Local Use Champions the dignity of every human being; works to dismantle racism and colonialism

Introduction

From the beginning, the deep listening process of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) has been rooted in scripture. Every listening group session began with Bible study.

In that same spirit, you will notice the prominence of scripture in the Transformational Aspirations video series being released over Fall 2022 and Winter 2023 on anglican.ca/changingchurch.

Each video has an accompanying Bible study for use in dioceses, parishes, and other Anglican contexts across the country.

We encourage repeated reading of the scripture passage out loud as you consider each question in turn. We also encourage open sharing, uncritical listening, and welcoming acceptance of each participant's contributions.

A new Bible study will be made available each month on anglican.ca/changingchurch, alongside the release of each video in the Transformational Aspirations series.



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John 2:13-17 (NRSV)

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 marketplace!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

Are you listening?

Commentary from Pastor Steve Greene

Can you hear the busyness of preparation for the Passover in the passage from John? There's the anticipatory hum of excitement and reverence as people travel from near and far to Jerusalem. The children of Abraham and Sarah go "up to Jerusalem," a physical setting (on a mountain) and they enter the holy and awesome presence of YHWH (spiritual setting). The population of Jerusalem explodes with the hustle and bustle! The Temple is gridlocked; the local resources would have been limited (food, shelter, clothing) because of the estimated tripling in population for the seven days. Due to the realities of travel, the faithful Israelites were unable to bring their animals for sacrifice. Thus, alas, the importance of the money changers enabling weary travelers to bring their currencies and have them exchanged for the temple tax and the purchase of animals.

Our passage takes place in the Court of the Gentiles, a place designated for non-Jews to worship Almighty God. The Court was the only access that the Gentiles had to the Temple, yet the vendors rendered Gentile worship impossible by using the area for commercial purposes. Imagine the sights and sounds, the overwhelming noise odour smell that accompanied a messy, bloody ordeal. Imagine being forced from your space, your identity, your cultural practices, your beliefs and norms. Imagine being told that the God you worship has the image of the oppressor and does not listen to the cries of the fallen, disenfranchised and marginalized. It is here that Jesus acknowledges the Temple as His Father's house and insists that it is to be treated with the utmost reverence. It is here that Jesus stands in holy righteousness and denounces exploitative behaviours against the holy space and against the "other."

A critical problem for Christians is that we intentionally neglect and even dismiss the radical demands of Jesus. The world believes and insists that we do not have a message



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for a world in desperate need of consistent and transformative truth, coupled with hope that life has meaning. Jesus yearns to see us follow Him. He seeks followers who will accept radical demands as essential goals. Followers who will fight the sin of racism and the ongoing plight of the “coloniality of being.” That fight requires us to faithfully eradicate the scourge of privilege. To overcome our individual and institutional complacencies. To embrace Jesus’ call and conviction that those of a “darker shade” are made in His image and called to be His children.

We need to be blasted out of our lukewarm apathy to the “other” due to skin colour and ethnicity. Our Scripture passage calls us to face and make some critical choices. A choice to embark on a radical transformation, a serious purging, a holistic deconstruction. A choice which enters fully into the reality that the bodies, minds and souls of Black, Brown, Asian and Indigenous peoples do belong to the Body of Christ; are to be loved; are imbued with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A choice to embrace deep and faithful theologies that challenge poisonous norms and pernicious evils of colonialism and racism. A choice that calls us and commands us to listen to the Holy Spirit and take bold, brave action against the complacent status quo.

Are we listening to God’s holy call?

Pastor Steve Greene is Rector of Holy Trinity, Lucan, in the Diocese of Huron.

Questions for discussion

1. What are your impressions of John 2:13-17? What connects and resonates within you? What creates conflicts within you?
2. How has our institutional church usurped the space of those of non-European descent?
3. Where is Jesus “overturning tables” against the exploitative measures the church has adopted and encouraged through the centuries?
4. How can you help expose the brokenness and be a minister of reconciliation in your local church? Community? City? Deanery? Diocese? How can we as Anglicans expose the brokenness and be ministers of reconciliation in the Anglican Church of Canada?



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