

### Reflection<sup>1</sup>

I am unsure how your feelings would be when suddenly someone we know as a faithful follower of God walks into our church, overturning the tables and chairs and pulling apart what we have taken our time to organise. Not only that, but he or she drove all of us out of this place and also called us, God's people, that we have made this place a "den of thieves." A phrase Jeremiah used to describe God's people during his time; when the temple was used for a similar purpose, God told him to go to the temple gate to stand and tell the people that God was not happy about what his people were doing. So, Jesus calling them thief, literally saying whatever you are doing here has no connection to what God has called you for.

Jesus felt action needed to be taken radically; he had been with the people for a long time, trying to help them grasp the message of freedom he was sharing. However, the people were not getting it because his teachings challenged their selfish ambitions. To the extent that God's house, which should be a place of freedom, has become a place of exploitation of the marginalised and the poor. Jesus acted promptly, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my father's house a marketplace!" The challenge here is to imagine Jesus entering our temples, our lives, and our hearts; what is it that I need Jesus to help me drive it out of my life. What is it in my life that I need to allow God's Spirit to speak to me encounter transformation?

Why have you turned my father's house into a marketplace? In the marketplace, there is always competition to attract customers with the aim of maximising profit; in God's temple, we help each other to grow our faith in Christ Jesus. It is a collaborative journey of self-giving. We don't compete for profit; instead, we aim to always try to be more like Jesus. I can see how angry Jesus was and why God should be angry at God's people at that time.

When the disciples saw Jesus' action, they remembered:

"His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me'" (John 2:17)

"For zeal for your house consumes me,

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 and John 2:13-22.

and the insults of those who insult you fall on me." (Psalm 69:9)

For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." (Rom 15:3)

Whatever we do in life is driven by the word "ZEAL" (**dedication or enthusiasm for something**)

For Jesus, he was dedicated to doing his father's work. The zeal within him is to bring healing to his abusive culture and community. The scribes and the teachers of the law are fixed on hanging heavy loads on people using the law. We heard the law given to Moses from Exodus; they abuse the word "thou shall not", so in their worship and relationships with the people, they were more into what people were not doing right, in their lens. The law was given to Moses out of God's love, God initiating a relationship with God's people, helping them to realise their new identity, not as a punitive weapon. So, Jesus knew that this was wrong, and action needed to be taken. 'HE WAS FILLED WITH A ZEAL' I wonder what zeal drives the leaders of this world nowadays. Look at what is going on around us; the poor, the homeless, and the marginalised are not cared for as we all hope to see. We are called to have the zeal of Jesus, the zeal that moves us to act and move as Jesus did. The zeal that moves us to accept and see ourselves as God's child and live by this.

The "Zeal" of the Lord, the power of the Lord, God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The zeal that came on David to face Goliath. The Holy Spirit brings to our understanding the message of the gospel. This revelation goes beyond looking for physical signs to believe. This is what causes the people to wonder sometimes why Apostle Paul, who has been with them, driven by evil zeal before, exploited the people and persecuted the Christians when he encountered God's total transformation. This new zeal led the people to wonder where this was coming from.

"Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1 Cor. 1:20)

For the world is all about unnecessary competition, winners get all; conversely, we are all called to be one in Christ. Sharing each other's burden in love and unity. So Paul

*"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18) we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, v23*

Power, status, and position were the cultural currency at the time; think about that in our context, wisdom, knowledge, intellect, and education are the primary cultural currency in most of today's cities. People want to make it – to have influence, to "make a difference which is not a bad thing. Christ's life suggests turning upside down wisdom and power, which sounds foolish. It sounds foolish because there is nothing particularly eloquent or attractive about the message of the cross. The cross is not immediately philosophically compelling. The cross of Christ – the wisdom of God – is foolishness because it simply doesn't make sense within the reigning paradigm. No mere human, in his or her right mind or otherwise, would have dreamed up God's scheme for redemption -through a crucified Messiah. It is too preposterous, too humiliating, for a God. The crucified Christ? Christ is supposed to be the one who is going to come and deliver sinners from bondage. What do you mean by a crucified Christ? A Messiah on a cross? This is a contradiction in terms. This is not wisdom; this is folly. This is foolishness, a messiah deliberately reaching out the lepers, the prostitutes, the criminals, etc.

It goes contrary to the wisdom of the world, but for us, the cross is true wisdom because it is a call for intellectual humility and the admittance of human limitations from a God who chose to humble himself and experience human limitations.<sup>2</sup> The cross is true power because it is a call to share the weakness of a God who subjected himself so that he might share himself with others. We know that the most compelling exercise of power is when power is shared; the cross is about power sharing, not power hoarding. True power calls for self-giving, which enables us to spot the abuse of power in our world.

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Um, Preaching the Word 1 Corinthians, The Word of the Cross (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 31-41

Our call to be God's people goes beyond just following signs; it is a zeal that moves us to act in a way that will bring freedom and salvation to people. A zeal that is driven by the Holy Spirit, a zeal that moves us out of our comfort zone to act and reflect in a way that Jesus did for us.

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