



Whenever he entered a cathedral where small souvenirs could be purchased, my dear father would roll his eyes and quote this passage to complain that churches should not sell merchandise. While he may have had a point - surely the Church should not be overly concerned with financial gain - nevertheless Jesus appears to be demonstrating a much deeper truth in this passage.

Here Jesus is angry, forthright and assertive – certainly no ‘gentle Jesus meek and mild’! He is outraged by the greedy and corrupt merchants who by their selfishness were blocking access to parts of the temple court set aside for Gentiles, thus excluding them from worship and denying their opportunity to experience God. In other gospel accounts Jesus declares ‘my house will be a house of prayer for all nations’. Perhaps Jesus had to repeat these actions several years later to remind individuals of his point.

What barriers do we place on those who are approaching the ‘temple’ our church, or seeking the truth? Barriers can come in many guises, both conscious and more subtle. Perhaps we don’t like people’s clothes, their behaviour, or condemn their differences? Do they speak too loudly in church or use language we view as in-appropriate. What if their lifestyle or views offend us, or do we expect people to clean up their act before they approach God? Does our cozy status quo need to be disturbed or shook up, a little like those tables?

The response of the Jews present shows they were looking at the situation with natural eyes, rather than the eyes of faith and thus they could not grasp the message. We however are called to see individuals through God’s eyes and situations through the prism of his heavenly lens, often very different to our own view.

When Jesus died the huge temple curtain was torn from the top to the bottom, so **all** might have access to God’s grace. We cannot keep God’s grace to ourselves or stop others from hearing the good news of his love. As his bride and those who have tasted freely of his goodness we should say boldly ‘Come..let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the free gift of the water of life’ – Revelation 22 v 17.