

Charles II took refuge from Cromwell and the parliamentarians, courtesy of a Catholic family. One of the pieces of furniture that you cannot miss in Boscobel House is a long table with a heavy top. On the one side the cooks would prepare the meal and then, when it was time to dine, the tabletop was turned over so that the clean side could be laid up for dinner. The “historian in residence”, a very eloquent guide, made us believe that that was how the expression “turning the table” came into use (but having looked it up since there are other explanations for the origin of the expression).

“Turning the table” is about reversal, reform, conversion, a new start, etc. And turning the table, literally and figuratively is the theme for today.

First of all we have the account of Moses receiving the 10 commandments. The 10 commandments are a gift from God to those who have been set free, showing them how they could hold on to their freedom. In leading Israel out of slavery God did for Israel what the people could not do for themselves, gaining their freedom. And so God overturned the table of oppression. And in giving them the commandments God provided them with a foundation upon which they could build a new way of living together, in freedom. No doubt, after having lived so long in bondage, in a foreign land, another table had to be overturned, that is, their mindsets. The many times that the people muttered and hankered after the “fleshpots of Egypt” showed that their mindsets needed to be liberated. God overturned the table of oppression and of a mindset and called the people to a life-affirming way of life in which love and righteousness would rule. It was a counter-cultural life style in which no other gods, no idolatry, no taking advantage of others had a place....instead it was based on love of God and love of neighbour.

In the gospel reading Jesus enters the temple in Jerusalem and observes that the temple authorities have allowed merchants and money exchangers to do their business in the temple court. That might not have been surprising as merchants and money changers were actually necessary for temple sacrifice and worship to take place. Pilgrims who travelled from a distance could not always bring the required sacrificial animals along; ordinary coins imprinted with images of Caesar could not be used to pay temple taxes. So why was Jesus angry? Why did Jesus see the need to lash out at the merchants and money changers, overturning their tables and releasing their sacrificial animals? What is Jesus protesting? I think it is the act of “doing business” in the temple court. It was a desecration of the place of worship. “Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” Jesus

says. It had become quite clear to Jesus that business transactions were getting too prominent a place in the house of prayer; they became more important than the purpose for which they were taking place. The sacred space was taken over and the “worldly” activities in the court became a hindrance rather than a help in the temple’s *raison d’être* to honour God’s glory and be the place for worshippers to offer the service of their lives to doing God’s will.

And so, as we reflect on the two Scripture readings of today we may ask ourselves:

What do we need to get rid of in our lives so that we may be “free” and live “life affirming” lives?

What have we made more important, in our lives, in our worship, than necessary or desirable?

What barriers to our relationship with God and with our neighbour have we allowed to creep into our lives?

What “ways of the world” have invaded our churches, gradually, subtly?

What tables might Jesus overturn if he walked into our churches today?

What are issues we get angry about? What tables do we need to overturn?

Jesus began a kind of “domino effect” of turning tables (barriers that separate us from God and from each other). And this domino effect is still going on as generations of people have followed Jesus to turn tables and change the world through their loving, courageous and passionate words and actions. We all can share in the act of turning tables, which may be going against the tide of the dominant culture, and perhaps it will make a difference in many lives, or only in one or two lives. But be assured, there will be joy “in heaven and on earth!” Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn Inspired by Love and Anger

Prayers & Lord’s Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for the world you created and the opportunities we have to enjoy its beauty and its life sustaining promise. When we find occasions to breathe in fresh air and exercise outdoors, remind us of our partnership with you to care for creation. As spring comes closer and the sun shines longer each day, reawaken our hope in your promise of new life to sustain us as the weeks of the pandemic stretch on.

Ever present God, we thank you for walking with us through days of uncertainty as well as times of pleasure and satisfaction. In times of risk

and stress, you provide a still point of calm. In times of challenge, you are the source of courage and confidence for us.

Thank you for hearing us when we pray, and for the wisdom and encouragement we receive from you.

We pray for those who are struggling with the isolation and frustration the pandemic has brought us. Bring them peace and patience with your love.

We pray for our churches as our common life has changed so much over the past months. Keep us strong in faith and fellowship, so that we may serve as agents of healing and hope in our communities.

We pray for our country and for the world. May leaders confront the challenges of this time with courage, wisdom and compassion.

We pray for innocent victims of violence around the world. Work through advocates for peace with justice to bring change where it is needed, and daily bread to those whose lives and livelihoods have been disrupted.

And we pray for all those who are enduring pain and illness, those who are facing grief and loss, and those who work on the front lines in our community, in health care, education, retail, emergency and public service. So many are exhausted by these months of pandemic. Be their comfort and encouragement day by day. And we pray together.....OUR FATHER

Offering

Make us foolish enough in our generosity, O God, that we might become wise enough to know that our gifts will be a blessing. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn Be thou my vision

Blessing

Go in peace....Blessed by the faithfulness of God
Inspired by the love of Jesus Christ
Guided by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Amen