The Prince of Peace Makes a Whip John 2:12-24

1. It is a passage that has made many people pull up in surprise. Some have leapt on this passage, claiming it justifies them dividing a church and breaking up families in the name of righteousness. Others use it to prove that Jesus was not a pacifist while others use it to prove that he was.

2. Before we try to prove anything with this, it might be important to figure out when and why this happened…and the "when" helps us a lot with the "why."

3. Jesus has just done his first recorded miracle – turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Go back to that Jesus story and you will see that Jesus was not just turning water into wine; he was rejecting the man made rules and countless hoops religious people tell us to jump through to prove ourselves acceptable to God (or acceptable to them, which they hold as an equivalency). He turned the water jugs (traditions) of men into the wine of joy and freedom.

4. In the verse immediately prior to our story this week, the scripture said that that sign showed the glory of Jesus – and, again, it wasn't about the wine; it was about the erasing of all the rules that men had piled on people who just wanted to live their lives and walk with God. (By the way, we used to walk with God in the garden before the fall of Adam and Eve. Jesus would routinely take his followers into the Garden and walk with them there – even the Garden of Gethsemane. Prepare for Easter and think about that)

5. In John 2:12, we see that Jesus is spending a few days with his mother and brothers and his disciples. Passover was coming so Jesus made the long trip to Jerusalem (about 78 miles, taking from 4 to 7 days). What he had just done with the water jars and the wine, he was about to do on a larger scale at the temple and it is VERY important that we understand that connection.

6. Along the long road to Jerusalem, Jesus would have seen large numbers of travelers. Many would be bringing a lamb or other animal for sacrifice. Others would be sharing what food they brought with others. It was a long and arduous journey and Jesus saw it all. When

he gets to the temple, he sees the market stalls of those selling cattle, sheep and doves (for each level of the economic scale). He saw those who ran currency exchanges (which, to this day, take quite a large cut).

7. Two things should be in the front of your mind: these men were taking advantage of people who wanted to obey God and worship Him. Capitalism is a good system except when it goes wrong by eliminating competition. If there is only one oil company or one telephone company, that's a problem. Here, there was only one temple and one set of priests who set the prices and accepted or rejected your sacrifices. It was a religious monopoly that should have worked great…but when people get involved, things can go wrong very quickly.

8. Jesus did not lose his temper. Just as at the wedding in Cana, he measured his actions, chose his response very carefully. He made a whip out of cords. While this has been said to be a Roman cat-o-nine tails, there is no reason to believe that. A whip made of several cords with knots along their length is quite enough for what Jesus had in mind.

9. Jesus remained in control of his actions. There is no record of him striking any human being. He drove the cattle out of the temple area, overturned the tables of the currency exchangers…but he didn't overturn the tables with doves. He told them to take their birds and go. Cattle and coins are easy to gather but doves are not. Jesus did not rob any individual of their property – he just moved it out of the temple area.

10. And that is the second thing to keep in mind. First, was that this was a religious monopoly that had been allowed to become a profit making business (like paying for prayer or miracles). The second was that Jesus had just walked a very long time in the company of people who wanted to draw close to God. When they finally arrive, there stands a phalanx of men between them and the temple. You had to go through them to get to God and Jesus found that intolerable – then AND now.

11. Removing the barriers and relocating it outside the temple precinct might not look like it would solve the problem but it did. Outside the walls, there was competition, bargaining, and comparison shopping. You weren't required to go through a selected group of men who were in favor with the priests.

12. It is rather surprising to many Christians when they hear that this was just the first time Jesus would cleanse the temple. This was right as his ministry was starting. The second time, not mentioned in John but mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke occurred in the last week of Jesus's life after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. And it was different…

13. In Matthew 21, he DOES overturn the tables of those selling doves. And there is no whip. They had had their warning. Jesus was demonstrating by this second cleansing that the first was not just a statement – removing all barriers between God and man was his MISSION. And it must also be ours.

14. At this cleansing, the first, the priests and theologians of the day challenged Jesus, demanding a sign or a miracle giving him the right to remove the barriers. He told them he WOULD – tear down the temple and he would rebuild it in 3 days. They scoffed at him…but he wasn't speaking of the physical temple; he was talking about the new temple.

15. Jesus was removing the physical location barrier to worship. When Jesus resurrected from the dead, all barriers were removed. You no longer had to go to Jerusalem or any other physical location to worship God – Jesus is our temple and we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are a temple without walls, without borders, without human barriers demanding you jump through their hoops.

16. So forget about the barriers. Forget about the "when the doors swing open, you swing in" mentality. Believe in Christ. Be baptized. And live your life AS a temple and IN our temple: Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God.