

# Priority One

**Sermon: Third Sunday of Lent 2009**

**March 15, 2009**

One of the questions that the children who participate in Godly Play are asked is “Are you ready?” It is asked of them before they enter into the circle. The circle is considered Sacred space where they will be told a story of God. In a very simple way they come to know the significance of worship and how worship is different than anything else because in worship they come to discover the presence of God.

As we gather as adults in this place we call the church we consider the sacred as well. It is a place that we too might ask ourselves if we are ready. Have we awoken yet? Have we left wherever we were before coming here? Are we here physically yet our minds are still focused on resolving the latest problem or entwined in yesterday argument at breakfast? Are we in tuned to listen to the story of God? Have we committed to make space, sacred space, in our lives for that encounter? Do we consider this sacred space in our lives a valuable treasure worth making a priority before all else?

My Mom had this china bowl that was passed down to her from her grandmother. It was probably not worth a whole lot as antiques go but in a sense it was considered to be a very special bowl. It was placed among the special dishes that were used only for occasions like Thanksgiving and Christmas and as children we were not supposed to touch them ever.

Well one day my sister and I were looking for a container to mix up some batter to make an imaginary cake or something. We found the bowl and thought that it would be perfect for our play. We went to the kitchen to look for ingredients and we found some water, flour and, egg and then we went down to the basement and mixed in some grey powder in daddy's work area. We mixed it all together and voila..It hardened like a rock. Mom's nice china bowl was forever caked with cement.

And yes as you might imagine, the fury that was unleashed on our behinds probably matched that of what Jesus did to those money changers and pigeon sellers that he chased out of the Temple. Until this very day I am leery about using china.

What is important here is that my sister and I had taken something precious and used it for our own selfish purposes paying no mind to what significance it may have had to the rest of the family.

Allow me to make the comparison of this china bowl and the covenant that God established with His people. This bond of love initiated by God that was passed down from one generation to another, this relationship valued so highly by the people of Israel was now enshrined in sacred space, holy ground in a place called the Temple.

Yet over time the chief priests and elders had forgotten that covenant. They began using that sacred space for their own material ends, for their own selfish purposes so focused on themselves that they lost touch with their God and found themselves in effect worshiping idols.

The act of Jesus of purifying the Temple of the Tax collectors and pigeon sellers points to the passion and zeal he had for preserving this covenant with God. It was not so much about the physical space in the building that the but rather it was about what that space represented

Idolatry in our lives today perhaps has little to do with graven images that we selling pigeons for sacrifice. Rather it may involve placing our wants and desires before those of God.

We take the precious gift of God's love and use it for our own selfish ends and not that of God's intention to love our neighbor. We continue to clutter up the sacred space that God has provided for us to know and love Him and fill it with all sorts of other concerns that we deem as having priority over our faith.

How often in our lives do we discover that our anxiety and worry has to do with our having our priorities out of whack? We push ourselves to meet some kind of crazy standard that God has never intended for us. We live out of someone else's expectations rather than those we find in our covenant with God. We cloud this sacred space with God up with all sorts of pressures that come from someplace other than from God

There is a clear divide between sacred space and our hectic lives. It is often only when we experience crisis ...when something we had deemed as ultra important falls apart that we come to recognize the true significance and priority of God in our life.

I pray that this Lenten season offers us an opportunity to get our priorities in order. And by doing so that we take the time to honor the sacred in our midst. Amen.