

# Speaking to the soul



## Centre of my life

Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of

**prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves!"**  
**Matthew 21:12-13**

At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, we read about the joyful celebration of Palm Sunday. The joyful celebration of Palm Sunday is followed by something completely different. Jesus walked into Jerusalem and was angered by the sight of the Temple precinct crowded with traders. This was nothing new. In order for worshippers to make their sacrifices, there was a rule that they had to purchase their birds or animals in the coinage of Tyre. They therefore needed the money changers to convert their Roman and Greek coins into that currency. This system was developed over many years, but Jesus' concern was that it totally obscured the real purpose of the Temple. Instead of it being a house of prayer, it had been turned into a noisy shopping mall within which unscrupulous traders and thieves could thrive.

It is possible for any organisation to lose its sense of purpose. It normally takes place so gradually that very few people notice. Churches have been established to worship God, but it is very easy for them to lose that focus and become no more than a social club or a music society. Jesus' strong words and dramatic actions need to make us reflect on our own churches. Are they still focused in the right way? Is worship still the central purpose of the Church or have we exchanged it for something that we find more comfortable or congenial? Jesus' powerful response to the traders in the Temple makes it clear that this is not a minor issue – it goes to the heart of what we are called to be as the people of God.

We also need to take Jesus' challenge personally. We need to look at our own lives and ask the searching question: "Is

prayer truly at the centre of my life, or have I allowed other things to crowd it out?”

## **QUESTION**

What challenge do Jesus’ words and actions pose to your own church?

## **PRAYER**

Lord God, help me to keep prayer at the centre of my life.  
Amen

*Photograph - After Palm Sunday, The Royal Chapel,  
Hampton Court Palace*

