

When, Dan Rather was TV Anchor for CBS he tells about attending a revival as a boy in his home town of Bloomington, Texas. It was a spectacular extravaganza that the whole town attended. The tent was open, the floor was sawdust. The build-up of the preacher's message came at a slow pace, but his point was **POWERFUL & VERY PERSONAL. HIS POINT WAS ABOUT EACH PERSON'S JOURNEY INTO THE NEXT LIFE AND THEIR FAITH.**

One night during the revival while Dan was sitting on a wooden bench with his grandparents, the preacher had **worked himself up to into a FURIOUS STATE about loyalty to the Lord.** It was then that he reached behind him into a chest, grabbed two snakes and tossed them into the crowd. Apparently the preacher thought the snakes would be the perfect object lesson.

People in the crowd couldn't tell if the snakes were poisonous or not by just looking at them. There was screaming and a mass exodus out of the revival tent. Dan says it was a sight to behold. *"You see," thundered the preacher triumphantly, "your faith is fragile."*

That was the last time Dan's grandmother would ever attend a revival. She just didn't see the point of the snakes. Dan couldn't figure out what the snakes had to do with his religious faith, which was and is in fine shape.

I can assure each of you that I will not be tossing any snakes in your direction this morning. Whether we agree or not with the revival preacher's tactics, **IT CERTAINLY GOT THEIR ATTENTION. There are times in our lives when we need someone to get our ATTENTION. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE GET "STUCK IN A RUT" AND WE NEED TO BE SHOOK UP.**

Jesus certainly had that effect on the religious establishment of his time. He had been looking forward to going to Jerusalem and the Temple for Passover. People from all over the world would be there to worship. Just being there with other pilgrims was exciting.

**When Jesus arrived at the Temple he was upset by what he saw.** There in the Temple courtyard were people buying and selling cattle, sheep and doves for sacrifices. The merchants who were selling the livestock thought they were providing a service for those pilgrims from out of town. They would not have to travel with cattle or sheep; one was available for them to purchase to sacrifice. Temple workers were also exchanging foreign coins for Temple currency. Again they thought they were doing the people a favor. People were required to use Temple currency when they made their donations.

**Temple employees were providing a service...** exchanging foreign currency into Temple coinage but they also were taking advantage of people by charging a large fee to make the exchange. Perhaps what angered Jesus the most was that they were taking advantage of the people who could least afford it. Charging one day's wages to exchange coins was outrageously high. The Temple became wealthy from this questionable practice. It seems the more money they made the greedier they became charging higher rates of exchange. Jesus was upset by what he saw. We are not accustomed to Jesus being angry. We like to think that Jesus was always kind and loving to everyone he encountered. We would like to think that Jesus never said a harsh word to anyone.

**Jesus was so angry that he felt he had to do something to GET THE OFFICIAL'S ATTENTION.**

**THERE ARE TIMES IN OUR LIVES WHEN IT'S ALL RIGHT TO BE ANGRY.**

Maybe that's the first thing we need to see this morning. Sometimes we get the idea that followers of Jesus should be **POLITE & GENTILE** people who never show their wrath.

Paul Harvey tells about a robber in Oceanside, California wearing a motorcycle helmet and carrying a gun who strode into a branch bank. He selected a teller who appeared fiftyish, soft, kindly, an easy mark. He handed her a note demanding money or her life. The woman reached for the cash drawer. Then she looked again at the note and her eyes

flashed, her lips clenched. She pulled the entire cash drawer out, but instead of giving him money, she clobbered the robber over the head with the drawer. And again and again. She was scolding him. Money was flying everywhere and she was beating him and shouting shame on him and bouncing blows off his helmet " until the young man turned and ran. Police caught him in nearby shrubbery. Then they asked the woman teller how come she was about to give him money at gunpoint and then, suddenly, instead, became enraged? She said, "*In his note there was a very naughty word.*"

**Different people get upset at different things. But there are times when all of us get angry.** *And sometimes the worst thing we can do is hold that anger in.* In a study of 139 patients with chronic headaches, researchers at St. Louis School of Medicine found that depression usually accompanies frequent headaches. **Moreover, suppressed anger amplifies the depression and this, in turn, magnifies the pain.**

**Everyone gets angry from time to time. Sometimes the worse thing to do is to deny that anger and hold it in.** We need to go to the person who is making us angry and get the matter resolved, if possible. Of course, it is not always a person who is responsible for our anger. *Sometimes it is a situation. Like Jesus' anger with the moneychangers in the temple.*

**SOMETIMES ANGER CAN BE CREATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE.**

*Some of the most repulsive social ills that have plagued humanity have been eliminated because somebody got angry. One person with a cause can make an enormous impact on the world.*

One day, a customer at *A SMALL URBAN POST OFFICE* asked a clerk if they recycled all their waste paper. The clerk did not know and decided to check into the matter further. She discovered that there was no recycling program at the post office. No one had ever thought of it. She decided she would start a recycling program. In no time at all hundreds of pounds of paper that before had been thrown into dumpsters and landfills were being recycled each week. She did not stop there. She became interested in environmental issues. She wondered what else she could do to encourage others to be more responsible toward our world and its resources. She began sharing her concerns with others she worked with. Earth Day was only a few weeks away. Her co-workers decided they wanted to do something to observe it. They planted a tree in the Town Common where everyone would enjoy it. Soon the clerks had set up a bulletin board in the post office lobby that carried articles and posters about the environment. Since most of the town's residents passed through the lobby on a daily basis, they could not avoid having their consciousness raised about the environmental crisis.

One of the clerks began writing a column for the local newspaper about environmental issues. Gradually the whole community's awareness of environmental issues was increased because of one clerk's curiosity about the recycling of waste paper. ***One person can make a difference, even if they are quiet and unassuming. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES IT TAKES A PERSON WHO IS 'ANGRY.'*** A person who can stand behind a CAUSE, a person who can ask others TO STAND WITH THEM...

It is because of BUILT UP ANGER that many communities are now taking drunk drivers off of their streets. OR those who believe our children's education and their future is worth fighting for are now making a difference. It is interesting that those who vote during the primaries or state-wide elections, seem to always pass school polls or transportation for the handicapped in our area. **These are the ones who GET 'ANGRY' AND SAY YES!!** Somebody has got to get angry. **Being angered by what we see can lead to some creative and constructive solutions.**

**JESUS GOT ANGRY. WHY???** People had traveled great distances to go to the Temple. The Temple was one place where people could feel closer to God. The sanctuary was a holy place. It was a place to feel God's presence in their lives. Amidst all the commotion of cattle, sheep, doves and money changers, people had a hard time praying. There were too many distractions, too much noise. Something had to be done. Jesus, filled with creative anger, made a whip of cords and drove out the merchants selling animals and overturned the tables where Temple employees were exchanging coins. It was a chaotic scene as feathers were flying, cattle running through the temple courtyard, and coins clattering to the ground.

Jesus shouted, **"Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"** Jesus got their attention. Sometimes we need to get angry. **Anger can lead to creative and constructive solutions.** However, Jesus' anger is not the focus of this story.

## **KNOWING THE REST OF THE STORY HELPS US TO SEE JESUS CLEARLY.**

Upsetting the religious officials by overturning their change booths and letting animals run through the courtyard didn't endear Jesus to the temple establishment. What right did Jesus have to do what he did? They wanted to know who Jesus was, was he the awaited Messiah? ***Only the Messiah could get away with such A MESS IN THE TEMPLE.*** The religious officials asked Jesus a question, **"What sign can you show us for doing this?"**

Jesus answered, ***"Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up."*** As is often the case in John's gospel, **Jesus' reply is not understood.** They think Jesus is speaking of the Temple, **while he is actually speaking of himself.** In shock and disbelief they inform Jesus that it had taken forty-six years to build the Temple. It was not possible to rebuild the Temple in just three days.

Following Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples remembered this incident. Afterward they remembered his words and understood them in a new way, "as words of faith. Jesus was not talking about the physical building " the Temple. He was speaking of his own death and resurrection. **Bury his body and within three days it will be resurrected.** You cannot keep his body down " particularly if you understand his body to be the church. **For Christians this is the Temple " not a building made with human hands, but a communion of kindred hearts. Wherever people are worshipping Christ and serving him, there is the temple of the living God.**

Billy Graham tells of his son Franklin's experience in the Middle East. Franklin was visiting a camp which held nationals from Kuwait. These people had traveled for days across the hot burning desert in buses. He noticed a woman who looked very distressed. She had small children around her. As Franklin began talking with her he discovered that she had given birth to a baby just three days before she and her family were evacuated from Kuwait.

The newborn baby was dirty and smelly. Franklin was able to help this young mother with needed supplies. He saw to it that she received medical attention as well. **The mother thanked him for helping them.** As they continued their conversation she revealed that she had once been a Christian, **but affluence had come between her and God.** She had gotten herself into a rut and was unable to get herself out of it. **She drifted away from God.** Franklin, she said, had rekindled the dormant flame within her. **As he shared with her God's willingness to forgive her, she found new fellowship with God.**

The last thing she said to Franklin was, ***"I just thank God for allowing my family to lose everything in Kuwait so I could find Him again."***

**She found Him not in a temple built with human hands, but in fellowship with one of Christ's followers.**

**JESUS WANTED TO GET PEOPLE'S 'ATTENTION.** He did it by a DISPLAY OF ANGER.

Sometimes it is good to get angry. ***Anger can relieve frustration so that we are more likely to be creative and constructive for God, ourselves and others***

- In Jesus' case, he wanted to make a point **"that God is not to be found in a BUILDING."**
- God is to be FOUND **"IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST' PEOPLE."**

**In Your Life...WHERE & HOW HAS GOD GOTTEN YOUR ATTENTION??**

**AND HAVE YOU FOUND GOD ONLY IN THE SPACE WE CALL "CHURCH?" OR AMONG THOSE WE CALL HIS PEOPLE? Amen.**