

John 2:13-22

The facilitator invites the participants to reflect silently on their context:

1. What makes up the environment you live in?

After a couple minutes the facilitator invites the participants to share their thoughts about the environment they live in, using a 'brainstorming' or 'pop corn' style in which everyone is encouraged to share.

When participants have had a chance to share fully, the facilitator uses the following questions to help participants further describe the environments in which they live.

2. What value do you place on the environment you live in? How do you personally take care of it?

The facilitator invites someone to read the text aloud. The participants listen to the text being read aloud.

After a brief pause to allow participants to think about the text, the facilitator uses the following questions to invite initial responses to the Bible reading:

3. What kind of setting or location does the action take place within?
4. Who are the key characters in the text?

When the group has responded fully, the facilitator then reads the following short input, and asks the group the questions that follow:

For the Jewish people the temple was a sacred place. God was understood to dwell in the Holy of Holies. The waters which watered the earth were believed to flow from the altar in the temple. The worship in the temple played a vital role in the fertility of the harvest, the regularity of the rain, and all the good experienced in creation. God was present here in the temple in a special way. It was a place where all people could come to worship God as the maker of heaven and earth.

In our text it is Passover - the time when Jewish people from all over the world would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Exodus from Egypt. Traditionally these pilgrims would have brought animals with them to sacrifice in the temple, but by the time of our story many of the pilgrims would have had to buy animals when they arrived in Jerusalem. Only animals declared 'clean' by the temple authorities could be offered as sacrifices. At the time of our text the buying and selling of animals had moved into the outer courts of the temple itself. These courts were for everyone, including the Gentiles - those who were not Jews. Pilgrims would have to change their money because the priests associated the images on the coins with idolatry, and so they would have to use the temple-based money-changers to change their money into temple currency and then pay to buy 'clean' animals sold by temple-based traders. All these economic activities were controlled by the priests in the temple.

5. How do the various characters relate to the temple in this story?
6. Why is Jesus upset about the way the moneychangers and sellers of animals make use of the temple environment?

When the group has responded fully, the facilitator then asks the following question:

7. How do you and others in your community exploit your environment?

When the group has responded fully, the facilitator reads John 2:15-16 again and invites the participants to consider concrete responses to the treatment of the environment in their own context by asking the following question:

8. What are you going to do in your community as a result of reading this text?