

This Lent, as we follow Jesus on the road towards Jerusalem and the Cross, we come to Jesus' liberation of the temple.

In ancient Judaism, the Jerusalem temple was a symbol for the world. The meaning of Jesus' symbolic action in today's Gospel then becomes clear. Jesus is liberating the world.

Last week, we saw the sense of the liberation Jesus brings. Not in any human political sense, but in a spiritual sense, Jesus is bringing liberation to the whole human race. Liberation, from the confusion of our sin. Liberation, through the cleansing power, of the Cross.

Jesus did not prove to be the hoped for political liberator. He thus met with opposition, an opposition which led to his arrest, execution, suffering, and death.

Where, in humble obedience to the mission he received from his Father, Jesus died for the liberation of the world. A liberation we must understand, not in political, but in spiritual terms. From an oppression we must understand, not in a political, but in a spiritual sense. By a Christ we must understand, not in a political, but in a spiritual sense.

A spiritual liberation that extends beyond the worldwide spiritual fellowship of the Christian Church, to the entire human race. To the future destiny, the spiritual liberation of the whole human race, in the future, of the kingdom of God.

From the beginning, the Jewish hope for a Messiah, was centred upon a future king, who would bring justice to the world. And, on this basis, peace. A justice and a peace, based on divine law, which would see Israel at the centre of history. With the God of Israel himself settling the conflicts among the nations, by divine teaching. By God himself teaching them what is right.

Divine justice, its realisation in the nations of this world, is the purpose of God's calling of Israel from the first. The mission of God himself in his world. So that all the nations of the world may flourish. The divine mission, divine justice, is here. The mission of God's people, then, is to proclaim the righteous will of God to the nations. So that the righteous will of God is done, among the nations. So that the kingdom of God does come, throughout the world. For the kingdom of God is a kingdom of right, and righteousness. The kingdom of God, is essentially a kingdom of values.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods but me. You shall not make for yourself an idol; you shall not bow down to them or worship them. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God. Honour your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal You shall bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.

The calling of Israel, was to bring justice and peace to world, by its faithful witness to the righteous will of God among the nations. To the universally binding content, of divine justice. To the universally binding core, of divine law.

At the very centre of the righteous will of God, at the very centre of this universally binding core, is that fellowship with God, and human fellowship, belong together. Both elements are essential, to peace and justice, harmony and blessing, among the nations.

Jesus did not contest the traditional law of God, as the unique expression of the righteous will of God for the nations. He affirmed it as the universally binding content of divine law, among the nations. Jesus did contest, however, the ground of its authority. So that, no longer the faith tradition of Israel, but God himself, and the future of his kingdom, where the destiny of the human race is located, is the basis of law. So that, in our relation to God, our legal relations with one another, have the basis of their validity.

Individual human destiny, for fellowship with God, in the future of his kingdom, goes hand in hand with the preservation and promotion of fellowship within human society, as this takes lasting shape in legal relations. We cannot work out our destiny of fellowship with God in the isolation of a purely individual relation to God. But nor can we work out our destiny for life in fellowship and peace without God. The attempt is often made, but the result has always been the distortion of fellowship by the rule of some over others. And the failure of the people to control themselves, as they ought, apart from relationship with God.

In the death of Christ God reconciled the world to himself. Not by a political liberator, but by a spiritual liberator, come to set us free from sin, Jesus is the long anticipated Messiah, the Christ, not of the Jews alone, but of the whole of

the human race. Whose destiny is a fellowship of justice and peace, in relation to God, and in relation to one other.

From the future then, and not from some distant past, the divine will to justice is at work in history itself, is the content of the proclamation of divine law on Sinai, and will be finally completed in the future of the kingdom of God.

In Jesus' liberation of the temple, we see Jesus' liberation of the world. Liberated, from the confusion of sin, and of false teaching. Liberated, into Christian freedom, by divine teaching. By the teaching of Jesus himself, who says to us: 'You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'.

Only as the Crucified one, Jesus is the Christ, the risen Son of God. Who wills to unite all people to himself, and through himself to God. Through the liberation of the human race itself, from disobedience under Adam, to obedience under Jesus Christ, the new Adam. The one true, innocent and obedient man. The pioneer of a new humanity, the living Lord of a new community, the worldwide Christian Church, who follow where he has led the way. The way of truth, innocence, and obedience. The way of the cross. The way of eternal life.

Amen