

SANITIZING JESUS

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Jesus entered into the temple of God, and drove out all of those who sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the money changers' tables and the seats of those who sold the doves. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers!" The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children who were crying in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David!" they were indignant…
Matt.
21:12-15 WEB

On this historic occasion Jesus saw what was needed and acted accordingly. He didn't offer to counsel with the offenders, but in anger and disgust drove them out into the street. Their sin was both practical and moral. They had violated the sanctity of the temple and had in jealousy and fear acted indignantly over the healing and deliverance being done for the blind and the lame. This was the "real" Jesus in action.

Do you worship a "sanitized" Jesus--- you know, one who never gets irritable, tired, disgusted, vengeful, and especially not angry or violent? Is your Jesus always loving, kind, forgiving, accepting, and blind to our faults and deliberate sins? Does your Jesus dwell only in heaven, surrounded by beautiful harp music, hordes of shimmering white angels, and the accolades and hosannas of departed saints? Does your Jesus never reject anyone no matter what they do? Is he all sweetness and light, understanding and dismissing our fallible, manipulating, untruthful, and cruel human tendencies?

Does your Jesus enter corporate boardrooms with the comforting words, "It's O.K., boys. The ten thousand workers you laid off in the latest merger were only so you could squeeze out more money for your golden parachutes and obscene stock options. It was only the free market at work, you know, and that's what Jesus supported."

If you

worship "that" Jesus you worship a Jesus designed and manufactured by religious authority to foster human comfort amid massive delusion. That Jesus never speaks out on pressing social issues because someone may be offended or may reduce their giving. That Jesus is a captive of domination systems that pay or otherwise support him in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

The "real"

Jesus walks the earth and speaks especially to people on the margins of society---people who may be dirty, smelly, inebriated, poorly dressed---in other words the undesirable elements that most churches would rather have darken someone else's door.

The real

Jesus was unfailingly kind and forgiving toward the marginalized, voiceless common citizens---those who suffered as he did under the heavy repressive hand of the Roman/Jewish Temple domination system of the day. Consider the case of the woman taken in adultery who faced death at the hands of angry male temple worshipers. Jesus forgave her and sent her on her way with the words, "Woman, where are your accusers? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way. From now on, sin no more" (John 8:10-11).

But when

Jesus encountered this system engaged in debasing the temple, as we saw earlier, the real Jesus emerged as he responded with anger and no small amount of violence. This Jesus is angered by oppression---especially when done in God's name---and reacts negatively against religious hypocrisy, delusion, the use of religious tradition to disguise and ignore truth, and the use of religion to enslave and rob the common people, most of whom were quite poor and without power in society.

What

conception of Jesus stalks the pews and isles of your church, and especially the pulpit? Is it the "real" Jesus capable of reacting angrily when the hubris or outrageous arrogance of the dominators demands it? Or is it the sanitized Jesus of endless peace and love whatever the situation? Think about it!