

“God’s Temple”

April 11, 2021

Luke 19:45-48

I. Introduction

In 1 Cor. 15:14 Paul wrote, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” As we’ve been reminded the last couple of Sundays, the story of Jesus Christ is of supreme importance. Because of this importance, God had four different men with four different backgrounds write about the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Matthew, the tax collector turned Apostle, wrote with his fellow Jews in mind. His theme was *Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews*. Mark, also called John Mark in Scripture, was a young man who spent time traveling with Paul and Peter. Using what he had learned, especially from Peter, Mark wrote for the Roman reader and presented Jesus as the Servant-Messiah who came to minister to needy people. Mark’s theme was *Jesus is God’s Servant*. Luke was an historian and a physician. He joined Paul during Paul’s 2nd missionary journey. Luke was commissioned to write 2 books—Luke and Acts—by a patron named Theophilus—turn to Acts 1:1-2. Writing with the Greeks in mind, Luke interviewed witnesses to piece together his Gospel. Luke’s theme was *Jesus Christ is the Son of Man who came to save sinners*. Finally, there’s the Gospel of John written by the Apostle John. Instead of emphasizing the humanity of Jesus, John wrote to all people emphasizing the divinity of Jesus. John’s theme was *Jesus is the Son of God*.

In the last verse of the Gospel of John, John wrote, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25). It was impossible for anyone to write down all the things Jesus said and did, so these four men, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), picked and chose the stories, parables, and miracles that fulfilled their theme. As we have seen, sometimes a story, a parable or a miracle was recorded by just one writer, sometimes by more than one. The clearing of the temple on the Monday following Jesus’ grand entry into Jerusalem on Sunday is recorded in Matthew and Mark as well as in Luke. Turn to Mark’s account—turn to Mark 11:11-19.

II. Monday in the Temple

Following His grand entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus had gone into the temple, “**but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.**” Because of Passover, places to stay would have been at a premium, so they probably spent the night with Lazarus and Martha and Mary. Early Monday morning Jesus and His disciples returned the 2 miles to Jerusalem, but on the way, He cursed a fig tree. After entering the city, Jesus proceeded to the temple. At this point Luke picked up the narrative. First, we see the cleansing.

A. The Cleansing of the Temple Jesus had cleansed the temple during His Passover visit some 3 years earlier—**turn to John 2:13-17.** Obviously, the results had only been temporary. It wasn't long before the religious leaders had allowed the money changers and the merchants to return. The priests received their share of the profits, and, after all, these services were a convenience for the Jews who traveled to Jerusalem to worship. This way a foreign Jew didn't need to bring his own sacrifice with him only to discover that it was rejected because of some blemish; this way the visitors could exchange their money into that which was acceptable in the temple. It was easy to rationalize what was happening.

This “*religious market*” was set up in the Court of the Gentiles—the only place near the temple where Gentiles could worship and pray, the place where the Jews should have been busy doing serious missionary work. Instead, the outermost court of the temple had been turned into a commerce center, where hundreds of thousands of animals and other items needed for the sacrifices were bought and sold. Money changers had also set up shop there. They did provide a needed service--the temple tax could only be paid using Jewish or Tyrian coins, so foreigners had to exchange their money for acceptable coins. But because they had a monopoly, granted by the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, the money exchangers charged outrageously high fees for their services. The sound of praise and prayers had been replaced by the bawling of oxen, bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, and the loud haggling of the merchants and their customers. The court of the Gentiles should have been a place for prayer, but instead the *Bazaar of Annas*, as it was called, was a place of abuse and extortion.

What Jesus did on that Monday of Passion Week would have been shocking. The crowds that hailed Him on Sunday were hoping that He was the earthly messiah they had been waiting for. Based on their expectations, He should have attacked the Roman garrison at Fort Antonia, which overlooked the temple, or He should have attacked the house of Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. But instead of attacking the pagan, idolatrous, occupying force of the Romans, Jesus assaulted the doings at the temple—the heart of Judaism. Through His cleansing of the temple, He attacked the respected, exalted, religious leaders of Israel who claimed to represent God. Jesus demonstrated that He wasn't concerned about Israel's relationship to Rome, but with the nation's relationship to God. He was moved to action not by Roman oppression but by Jewish religious corruption.

Jesus made His way to the Court of the Gentiles and “he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there.” Instantly, Jesus turned the Bazaar of Annas into complete chaos as “He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves” (Mark 11:15). They were all frightened and ran out of the Temple. In addition to getting rid of the merchants, Jesus stopped people from using the temple grounds as a short-cut to carry goods into the city—He “would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.” Considering the resistance, He must have encountered from the merchants, Jesus demonstrated immense personal force and strength. Jesus' actions demonstrated that the Lord hates those who pervert worship for their own greed.

As He drove them out, Jesus “said to them, ‘My house will be a house of prayer’; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’” The first phrase is from Isaiah 56:7, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” The Jews looked at the temple primarily as a place of sacrifice, but Jesus saw it as a place of prayer. Prayer is the heart of worship. True prayer is in itself a sacrifice to God—turn to Psalm 141:1-2. The temple was not only for the Jews but also “for all the nations.” But with all the noise and activity in the Court of the Gentiles, there was nowhere for a Gentile proselyte to go to worship God.

The second phrase is from **Jeremiah 7:11**: “**Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you?**” “*A den of robbers*” is the place to which robbers—thieves—run when they want to hide. The chief priests and scribes and the leaders of the people were using the temple and its religious services to “cover up” their sin and hypocrisy. The leaders of the people thought that they could rob widows’ houses and then perform the prescribed sacrifices at the prescribed times in the prescribed way and then be safe and secure. But neither the Temple itself nor the actions done in it were any guarantee of blessing from God. It was what the people did in the temple from their hearts that was really important.

B. The Hatred of the Leaders

The cleansing of the temple fueled the hatred of the leaders. Matthew added some other details to the happenings on Monday which drove the leaders to “**trying to kill him, i.e., Jesus.**” **Turn to Matthew 21:12-17.** Matthew is the only one to mention the healings that followed Jesus’ demonstration of divine anger. These healings further increased the hatred of the leaders towards Jesus. The diseased and the crippled, many of whom were beggars, daily gathered at the Temple hoping for a gift of money from the religious ones or, if they were lucky, a miracle of healing. But, generally, they were despised and ignored by most of their countrymen. It was assumed they were suffering as the result of sins either they or their parents had committed and there was little compassion for them.

Obviously, Jesus hadn’t cleared everyone out of the Temple. Only those with guilty consciences had fled the scene. Those who needed Him stayed. Jesus had anger for those who took advantage of others and kept them from coming to God, but He had compassion for those who recognized their need. Jesus healed to relieve suffering and to demonstrate His divine power and authority. This compassion for others was a sign of Jesus’ divine kingship, not only because of the power it demonstrated but also because of the gracious love it demonstrated to everyone regardless of position—a love that was uncharacteristic of sinful man. Following the healing there was praising.

Jesus’ healing activities prompted the children in the temple to mimic the praising they had heard the day before when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus’ actions in the Temple in pronouncing judgment and

then healing the blind and the lame caused the children to correctly identify Him as the Son of David—the Messiah. But instead of joining in worship, the Temple leaders became extremely angry with Jesus and demanded that Jesus make the children stop.

Rather than being moved by Jesus’ miraculous healings and compassion, the religious leaders were shocked and outraged by Jesus’ actions and teachings. He became the target of their hatred. Their hatred increased as Jesus’ popularity increased. Seeing “the children who were shouting in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant” (Matthew 21:15). Luke wrote that “the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him.” They realized they were losing control. John 12:19 put it this way, “So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’”

In the days that followed, they argued with Jesus and tried to catch Him in His words, but they failed. For the time being, they couldn’t touch Him “because all the people hung on His words.” But, sadly, in a few days the crowd would turn on Jesus and scream for His blood. After His resurrection, only 120 believers would gather in Judea (Acts 1:15), with 500 more in Galilee (1 Corinthians 15:6). But this too fulfilled God’s purpose, as Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 53:3, “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”

Afraid of the threat He posed to them economically and to their prestige and standing with the people (John 11:48), the religious leaders intensified their efforts to destroy Him. They would be successful on Thursday when Jesus surrendered to them and then fulfilled God’s purpose by dying on Friday as God’s chosen sacrificial lamb. As Peter preached in Acts 2:23, “This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

III. Conclusion

As well as explaining things that led up to the arrest and death of Jesus, Luke is also asking a question: “*What does God want in His house?*” But first, what or where is God’s house? Yes, just like the temple in Jerusalem, this building is God’s house—a place to get away from the hustle and bustle of the world and spend time with God. But listen to these words from [1 Corinthians 3:16](#), “*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?*” If you are a child of God—a Christian—you are also the temple of God. The Holy Spirit—God—lives in each one of you.

The story of Jesus’ cleansing the temple on that Monday of Passion week shows several things that should be found in God’s temple. **First**, as Jesus quoted from in [Isaiah 56:7](#), “*His house is to be ‘called a house of prayer.’*” True prayer is a sign of dependence on God and faith in His Word. In [Luke 11:9](#) Jesus said, “*So I say to you: ‘Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.’*” We pray as a congregation, but is prayer found in your temple? When or how do you pray when you are by yourself? Who or what do you depend on? Where do you go first when there is a need or a problem—to God or ...? **Second**, just as Jesus healed the blind and the lame in the temple, God’s house is to be a place where people can be helped—both physically and spiritually. How about your life—do you help lift people up physically and spiritually, or do you excel in putting people down? Are you an encourager or a discourager? **Finally**, as we saw the children do in [Matthew 21:15](#), God’s house is to be a place of praising God. Paul summarized this in Colossians; [turn to Colossians 3:15-17](#). Do you spend time praising and worshiping God, or are you like those Jesus drove out of the Temple—do you take away from His worship and praise? What about your heart? [Heb. 10:22](#) says, “*Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*” The bottom line really is: “Who or what is king of your life?” How do you use God’s temple? Let me close with [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#), “*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.*”