

Christ Cleanses the Temple

Luke 19:45-48

August 20, 2023

Well, I'd like to invite you to turn to the Gospel of Luke this morning. Luke 19:45. It's so good to be back with you. I can't believe how long I've been gone, but it is, it is really a joy, a privilege for me to open the word of God with you to this morning. I count it such a high and holy honor that we get to do this together, such a joy.

As we get into Luke 19 and here in verse 45, even though this is kind of the, this section is the end of chapter 19, it really is the beginning of the final section of Luke's Gospel. Which is why when, the last message I preached, I wanted to stop here instead of moving on and finishing the chapter. Wanted to start here this morning and through the next number of weeks as we go through into this final section of Luke's Gospel.

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The setting is Jerusalem, specifically the temple. And the temple as many of you know in Israel was the religious heart of the nation. Throughout Israel's history we can see as goes the temple, so goes the nation. If the temple is in disrepair, the nation is filled with idols, idolatry, and corruption.

As goes the religion of the temple, so goes the nation of Israel. And that's true of really any nation, of any people, that its soul is manifest in its worship. The soul of a nation is manifest in its worship, in its religion. It's for this reason, then, that the Lord as Israel's Messiah, when he enters into Jerusalem, he goes directly to the temple of God. That's where we see him show up in Luke's Gospel. As he enters into Jerusalem and even talk about him entering in the city, he talks about him entering into the temple. He makes a beeline for the temple of God.

And we can almost see here that the scene is sort of a preview of the future fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Malachi 3:1 says, "behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to

his temple. And the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight and behold he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."

The last time that we were studying Luke's Gospel together, we saw the coronation procession of the Messiah. We were watching him as he made his way toward the city. That's also known as the triumphal entry. As Jesus drew near to the city of Jerusalem, remember, he was riding on the foal of a donkey. And that brought the long journey section of Luke's Gospel to its end. The journey ends here today. This is the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry.

The final week of his, we could say his pre-Resurrection life. And by the end of this week, on Friday, the Lord will die on the cross. In our study we follow the Lord and His disciples as they walked from Jericho to Jerusalem. That was Friday, March 27th of A.D 33. The Lord and his disciples, they arrived at Bethany on that Friday. They stayed with friends, Lazarus, his friend, along with his two sisters, Martha and Mary.

And it was either that evening on that Friday, or the perhaps the following day, which was the Sabbath. They were all guests of a man named Simon called Simon the Leper. He was a former leper, a man whom Jesus had healed. And that man, Simon hosted a dinner for the Lord and his disciples in his home.

Well, that would happen to either on that Friday evening, or perhaps on the Sabbath, maybe on the Sabbath. And then, after that Sabbath Day's rest, Jesus set his sights on finishing his mission. So the next day after that Sabbath obviously, was the Sunday, March 29th of A.D. 33, where we saw in the previous section here that Jesus planned and then prepared for, and then set off on his coronation procession, the triumphal entry. Not a long journey from Bethany, where he was staying into Jerusalem, just a couple of miles. But it was a as we saw, a sorrowful journey. Filled with the cacophony of praise and excitement, and joy and palm branches, and cloaks being laid before him, and everybody cheering. But it was a sorrowful journey for the Lord, as his mind is troubled by the impending doom that's going to fall upon the city and its people. For precisely this they rejected their Messiah.

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It was at the end of that day, according to Mark's Gospel, Mark 11:11, that Jesus did enter into Jerusalem. And it says there in Mark 11:11 that "he went into the temple and when he had looked around at everything, and as it was already late, he went back to Bethany with the twelve." So at the end of that Sunday, goes to the temple, takes a look around, surveys the temple complex, everything that's going on there. And he says, I don't have time, so he goes back to Bethany, rests that night with the twelve.

So we come to Luke 19:45, our text. This is the day after the triumphal entry, so it's a Monday. Let's read the text, "And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold. Saying to them 'it is written, my house shall be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of robbers.'" And he was teaching daily in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him. But they did not find anything that they could do. For all the people were hanging on his words."

Short section, man, there's a lot there. In fact there's, there's enough here for two sermons. But I'm going to do one sermon. But the verses here set the context very, very powerful, poignant, packed with, with information, packed with significance, packed with meaning, these verses of scripture. But they set the context really for everything that follows in Luke's Gospel, into chapter 20.

Everything that follows the temple cleansing, the religious leaders coming to Jesus, going on the offensive, attacking his authority, challenging his authority. Jesus responding to them very authoritatively, silencing them really in their attack. And then he confronts and then warns them with a parable that he tells all that is coming in chapter 20, but it's set up by this event.

The religious establishment in Jerusalem wants Jesus dead. We can see that here. It's alluded to or spoken of, but we can see they can't pull it off because of his popular appeal. So what they decide to do instead is attempt to undermine his credibility before the people, turn the people against him.

Let the people see that he's, he's really nothing but a hollow suit. He's really a false Messiah. He's a false hope, a false savior. They want to undermine his credibility, turn the people against him. Ultimately, they do get their wish, as the people do turn on Jesus, call for his blood, call for his crucifixion, and by the end of the week, as we said, he'll be dead.

The spark that lights the fire, sets this dry kindling of a city to blaze is what we see right here in this account. As the Messiah enters into Jerusalem and he goes directly into the temple and he acts like, well, he acts like the Messiah that he is. He acts like what he is, which is in charge. This is his Father's house. This is his temple. It's his place.

He acts like their Messiah because he is their Messiah. He does what's appropriate, what's necessary, and they want to kill him for it. As the Messiah, God's chosen and anointed king, Jesus has a lawful interest in the temple and what goes on there. He has a righteous concern for the purity of Israel's

worship. To see the temple of God be regarded by everyone as holy, that's what puts him at odds with the religious establishment.

Seeing the righteousness of God in him, they reject that righteousness for themselves. What Jesus does in the temple, it strikes at the very heart of their false religion. By their false religion, these chief priests, these scribes, these principal men of the city, of the people, they by their false religion, had been whitewashing all of their human greed. Covering it over. Making it look religious.

By their pragmatism and deception, they were even able to justify murder, all the while covering over their evil intentions, the intentions of their heart, the motives of their heart, the impurity of their hearts. With a pious mask of religiosity, they looked like good people on the outside. They were whitewashed tombs filled with dead men's bones, all kinds of iniquity.

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So when Jesus came to the temple, just his action there ripped off their masks. It exposed the temple leadership as corrupt, along with everyone who was in league with them. All of them corrupt, nothing but a band of robbers, a bunch of criminals hiding out in their den, in their cave.

And what concerns our Lord here, what arouses his righteous indignation, they had made the temple into their hideout. They turned it into a den of iniquity, a place where they felt comfortable. And listen, as we saw in Isaiah 6, sinners should not feel comfortable in the presence of a Holy God. So as the Lord starts to prepare for the end of his earthly ministry, he goes into the temple.

What's the goal? The goal is to prepare the temple in order that he can prepare the people. He cleanses the temple. He casts out the chaos in order to establish good order and propriety there. And he does this so that he can teach, so we can preach the gospel. So the people's ears are not struggling to listen to the truth as taught by him because they're hearing the bleating of sheep and the lowing and mooing of cows, bulls, oxen.

He wants to preach the gospel without having to compete with commerce, having to compete with the, the people's attention as they hear the money changers arguing and squabbling with the guy who's changing his money about the rates. His desire is that people are able to hear the truth without distraction.

And that by the way, just a little footnote, is why churches must have order. It's why churches must have membership processes. It's why churches must keep things in order, done with propriety and decency. Why? Because the truth is crucial. There's a chapter in Charles Spurgeon's book called, *Lectures to My Students*, which I highly recommend even if you're not a, a ministry student. But it's, the chapter, is just simply entitled, *Attention*.

And Spurgeon, in that chapter, helps his students understand and will help all of us understand how much competes for the attention of the hearers of God's Word. Thoughts that come into the mind, wiggling children, too hot, too cold,

distractions in the environment. He says, "above all things, you need to protect against the distractions in the worship service."

And the one who has the most interest in distracting the people of God from hearing the Word of God is the devil, the enemy of our souls. That's why it's so important that we take time to quiet our hearts, as Josh did with us this morning. We have to take time to make sure we confess any known sins, make sure there's nothing between us and the Lord, or us and other people.

That's why Jesus says in Matthew 5, "if you there come before the altar and realize you have something against your brother, leave your gift there at the altar. Go be reconciled first with your brother, then come back and offer your gift." Why? take away every distraction, every impediment, every obstacle to hearing the Word of God. So vital.

That's Jesus' concern as he comes to the temple, his overarching interest is love. Love for whom? First love for God.

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A love for God caring for the purity of the worship in the temple that God might be truly heard, seen, glorified, worshipped, and then a love for the people. A love for the people so they can know and understand the truth.

Love is driving his every action, his every concern. So two main concerns, which are going to be two outline points for you this morning. Both of these motivated by love. Number one, Christ prepares the temple, and number two Christ prepares the people. Christ prepares the temple and Christ prepares the people. Here's his first concern. Christ prepares the temple.

It's verses 45 and 46. It's where we see where Jesus went when he entered Jerusalem. We see what he did when he got there, and we see why he did it, in verses 45 and 46. So that's a first, second, and third little sub-points where, what, and why.

First, let's talk about the Lord's attention. First, the Lord's attention. By observing where he went when he entered into Jerusalem, we see what caught Christ's attention, and we can discern by what caught his attention what is first and

foremost on his mind. As I mentioned, this is the first time that we see Jesus in Jerusalem in Luke's gospel.

By the way, in verse 45, when we see him, we see that he is in the temple, so we have to assume that if he's in the temple while he's in Jerusalem. But Luke hasn't told us that explicitly. By contrast, Matthew and Mark tell us he entered into Jerusalem and entered into the temple.

Matthew tells us, Matthew 21:10, when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up and then it tells us later he entered in the temple. Mark too, Mark 11:11, he entered into Jerusalem and then the temple. Luke portrays, as I said, the action differently.

He avoids telling us that Jesus has arrived in the city of Jerusalem. He's even waited to use the word entered, *eiserchomai*, he waits until Jesus actually enters into the temple. That's the first time he uses the word. So we see in Luke 19:45, he entered the temple. We tracked this going through the coronation procession. We see that Luke tells us that all of

that took him near the city, but Luke never said he entered the city.

We read things like in verse 36 "as he rode along." We know he's getting closer, right? Verse 37 says he's drawing near and then he's on the way down the Mount of Olives, which we can picture. He's descending into the Kidron Valley, adjacent to Jerusalem, but not yet in Jerusalem.

Luke 19:41, when Jesus drew near, when he saw the city, he wept over it, and then he prophesied its destruction. At that point we know he's still on the way down the Mount of Olives. He's still able to see a panoramic view of the city, and that's what evokes his emotion, his weeping, and his lament. But still not yet in the city, Luke holds back from telling us.

And then at this moment, this one moment, we see Jesus come down the Mount of Olives, weeping, prophesying destruction. Then, poof, he's not only arrived, suddenly he's in the very heart of the city itself, having entered into the temple. As Israel's Messiah, he is the head of State. Isaiah 9:6. The

government is on his shoulders, so he is the, not only the figurehead, but the very active King over this nation.

He is the head of not only the nation, but the head of God's entire Kingdom. And his first concern we can see as he enters into the city. It's not political, it's not economic, it's not a marshal concern, he's not wanting to inspect the troops, his primary concern is for the temple, which is at the heart of God's Kingdom. Why is that?

Because whatever may have been going on in Jerusalem, whatever may have been wrong with the city of Jerusalem, whatever it may have been wrong in Judea, with its Roman oversight, and overlords, and the oppression of Rome. Whatever's going on in Jerusalem, its politics, its economy, its educational system, all of its social problems and by the way, there were many social problems in Jerusalem: Factionalism, sectarianism, disunity, Zealot parties, Sadducee parties, Herodian parties. They were all vying for power, all fighting with one another.

All that the, the trouble that that created with its policing, with its military concerns, none of those concerns mattered if the religious heart of the nation was rotten. Why? Because the heart of religion, if it's rotten, everything else will be rotten.

If the individual and the nation's worship is right, everything else will be right. Where he went first, it shows what has the Lord's attention, what draws his concern. His eye is set on the temple. He goes to the heart of the matter. He goes to the radical foundation and deals with that.

Secondly, we see the Lord's intention. When we see what he did at the temple, we can discern his intention. By comparing the other synoptic Gospels, even in the brief way they treat the second temple cleansing, we can see that Luke has significantly abbreviated this scene, abbreviated the action in verse 45.

He entered the temple, began to drive out those whose sold. That's all he says. Just nine words in the Greek, nine words summarize what Christ did in the temple, very brief for such a

mighty demonstration of power and messianic authority and his command presence. I mean, if we just stop and meditate on just those nine words, we have to imagine this temple complex thronged with people, thousands upon thousands of people hustling and bustling and interests everywhere. And one guy walks in and clears the place out.

But Luke abbreviates this so that he can speed the readers along. That's us. He wants to speed us along so we can see the greater significance of Christ's action. Why it is he did what he did in verse 46. He wants us to see the reaction to what he did in verses 47 to 48. And this all, as I said, all sets up the confrontation and the parable in chapter 20.

But I think it's important for us to pause, expand this out a bit so we can understand what is it that led to the need to cleanse the temple. If we look over in Matthew, he tells us that Jesus didn't drive out just those who sold like Luke says. He tells us he drove out all who sold and bought in the temple. So all the, all the merchants and all the shoppers drove them out and he overturned the tables of the money changers.

So all the people who are making, you know, doing exchange, money exchange. And he also overturned the seats of those who sold pigeons. Mark adds to that. He includes those details and then he adds this, that Jesus wouldn't even let anyone carry anything through the temple. But I just bought this. Drop it and go.

No commerce, no shopping, no buying, no selling, not even carrying any of your purchases through the temple complex, and no changing money. What's the message? What's he want us to hear? What's he want us to see here? Luke wants us to see that the temple is not a mall.

The worship of God is not like shopping. It's not like our everyday experiences. It's not like just going out to the movies or to a, to a restaurant or going to get some clothes. Worship is something different, and there is a higher purpose for the temple and all of this stuff is corrupting it.

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Things common, things mundane, not even sinful in and of themselves. But when they are mixed with religion, when they are mixed in with worship, they are profaning and corrupting. The worship of God is a thing to be set apart as holy, holy, holy. And we need to remind ourselves that Jesus has done this before.

This is actually the second time that Jesus has had to cleanse the temple. The first time he cleansed the temple was earlier in his ministry, recorded in John chapter 2. So I'd like you to turn over to John chapter 2 just briefly and let's take a look at that together. John's Gospel is the only one really to record that first temple cleansing, so you want to turn there because it has some important background detail for the second temple cleansing. You'll look at John chapter 2 starting in verse 13.

John writes this, "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and in the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there and making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen. He poured out

the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons take these things away and do not make my Father's house a House of trade."

Oxen, sheep, pigeons, all sacrificial animals. So why were they selling them in the temple? Aren't individual worshippers supposed to raise their own animals and bring them to the temple from wherever they're traveling from? And by the way, what's the deal with the money changers? Why the need for a currency exchange, banking to go on at the temple? But what John describes here, what the other, Luke and the other synoptic Gospel writers record about the second temple cleansing, John is describing here the abuses and the perversions of what was once a perfectly legitimate service to address a perfectly legitimate problem especially in the time of the Diaspora, when so many Jews were living in different parts of the empire.

Sacrifices were required by the Law, the Law of Moses, they're, they're required to be offered by the people at the temple. And we can see that there are three annual Pilgrim feasts. They're called Pilgrim feasts because the adult males

were required to travel to Jerusalem and then offer their sacrifices in person.

All males, twenty years old and upward, were to come to Jerusalem three times a year in person, present themselves before the temple, and the three Pilgrim feasts were the feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover, which is around March, April time frame. Then the, fifty days later was the Feast of Weeks, or we call it Pentecost. Pente, referring to the five, the fifty days later. And then in the Fall, September, October, the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths. Two in the springtime, two feasts in the Springtime, and then one feast in the Fall.

Coming to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, Jews of the Diaspora had to travel from great distances, many long miles, take an arduous and often very dangerous journey, harsh conditions and so rather than try to bring their own pascal lamb or a pigeon or oxen, bringing it from their own country and bringing it, traveling with it, keeping it healthy, spotless, fed, all the feed that they need to bring to bring those

animals, keep that animal without blemish in order to offer a fitting sacrifice at the temple.

And by the way, it was the priests at the temple who inspected sacrificial animals to make sure that those animals were indeed without blemish. They either gave their approval or withheld their approval. You don't want to travel all those hundreds or even thousands of miles to Jerusalem with an animal that you get to the temple and it's rejected.

Now what are you going to do? So it was not only convenient to take advantage of a, of a service that would sell you sacrificial animals, it was even prudent to procure your sacrificial animal a lot closer to Jerusalem. And you can see, if you're business minded at all, you can see the immediate business opportunity this provided for enterprising ranchers who raised oxen, lambs, and even those who raised doves or pigeons for sacrificial purposes. So you can see how this may have started out legitimately. It did start out legitimately.

What about the currency exchange? Is that legitimate? Well that had to do with the annual requirement the, to pay a half shekel temple tax. Exodus 30 versus 12 to 16. You can read about one of the purposes of the census in Israel, whenever the government starts counting noses, they're after your nickels, right?

So they're, they're counting. They're taking a census and in addition to the men, numbering the men twenty years and older to register them for selective service, this was also another purpose is to collect what became known as the temple tax. In the practice of collecting this temple tax, a half shekel for each male in Israel, whether poor or rich. No matter what your means were, half shekel for each man. That was a practice that was reestablished, reinstated under the governor Nehemiah. You can read that in Nehemiah 10 versus 32 to 34.

So every year, in connection with the Feast of the Unleavened Bread and Passover, every Jewish male had to pay that half shekel tax for the upkeep of the temple complex, for the maintenance of the priesthood, for the temple operations. Since

Jews, during this time, again they're coming from all kinds of different places in the world.

Different forms of currency. Bringing their shekels from different places in the world where they live, and not all shekels were of equal value. Just as an illustration, the Roman shekel was only about 80 percent pure silver, but the temple standard required by the temple priests, it was the Tyrannian shekel. It was 94 percent or higher silver content. So if you didn't come to the temple with a, ter, Tyrion shekel in your hand, your shekel would not be counted or accepted at the temple. You had to go see the money changers and they would exchange that for you.

Travelers are required to go through that currency exchange. Make sure that they had the appropriate coinage to fulfill their national and religious obligation. So they were properly registered and did their duty according to the nation, according to the law. As I said, these requirements, it created opportunities for enterprising people, businessmen, for

legitimate businessmen who are trying to provide a service for fellow worshippers.

But it's very easy to see what was once legitimate, can creep into the realm of the illegitimate. Providing a service for people can all of a sudden create an opportunity for those who are unscrupulous, a bit greedy. For those who are truly corrupt, corrupt priests, were in league with corrupt businessmen and they could get kickbacks for disqualifying sacrificial animals. They disqualify the animal and send those people over to, those pilgrims, over to purchase animals from merchants on the approved merchants' lists.

Money changers, too, added their percentage to the fees for currency exchange services, and they jacked up their rates. And then you can imagine with different money changers in the temple how one money changer is hollering out to people on the one hand and telling them about his exchange rates and the other one is saying, oh we'll, undercut his price. So come over here and they're back and forth and there's bickering that ensues. And as

one guy feels cheated, they start arguing in the temple complex. Place of prayer turns into a place of argument.

During annual Pilgrim feasts, where the population of Jerusalem swelled by hundreds of thousands of people, even into the millions. Thousands of animals were bought and sold. Josephus records that more than two hundred and fifty thousand lambs were sacrificed in A.D. 66, which is the year that the temple was completed. Maybe there were more people, then, more, more sacrifices offered, but we don't know the exact number of animals that were sacrificed in A.D. 33, but it was up there.

And that's, that's lambs sacrificed. That's not counting the oxen. That's not counting the pigeons or the doves. So these merchants and the money changers, when all this started, they used to do business across the Kidron Valley over on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Plenty of room for the animal, the sacrificial animals, their stalls, their noise, their smells, all that could be kept over there. But over time, the whole enterprise migrated across the Kidron valley. Merchants and

money changers set up shop in the court of the Gentiles. Well, how did that happen?

Well here's where we see the influence of the Sadducee party. The Sadducees. The Sadducees were religious, a religious sect of Judaism, and they were theological liberals. These liberals, they denied the supernatural elements in the Old Testament. They denied the existence of angels. They didn't believe in really a reality of heaven or hell or judgment or afterlife. They mocked at the idea of resurrection.

As we're going to see in our text, they were liberals. They came from old money in the city. These are the blue bloods from the upper crust, socially elite families in Jerusalem. Since the prominent leading men of the city were Sadducees, the family of the high priest belonged to the Sadducee party as well. They saw the temple, a business opportunity.

In fact, the temple marketplace was known as the bazaars of Annas. Annas is the name of the high priest. They brought this whole thing inside the temple complex, and they were able there

to rent out tables and booths and stalls to the merchants and to the money changers, setting them up with booths and stalls there in the court of the Gentiles. And of course, they were charging and making money.

The word for temple, by the way in John 2 also at the first cleansing of the temple as well as in the synoptic Gospels at the second temple cleansing, the word for temple is *hieron*, *heiron*, and it refers to the entire temple complex. Maybe you have in the back of your Bible a little schematic of the temple and you can see that whole place with its outer courts, its inner courts, and even the temple building itself. The whole place is called the *heiron*.

The inner temple, that's the building where the holy place is and the Holy of Holies. That's called the *naos*. The *naos* at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, where Zechariah was ministering before the Lord when the Angel Gabriel came and announced to him the birth of John the Baptist or the conception of John the Baptist in his eventual birth, his role as the Lord's prophet.

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That's where Zechariah was, was in the *naos*. He's ministering there before the Lord. It's the Holy place. The Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was, was separated from the Holy place by a veil. The High priests could enter into that Holy of Holies once a year with the blood of atonement for propitiation for the sins of Israel. But the sanctuary, the *naos*, that inner building was, would then surrounded by the court of the priests. And the court of the priests, that's where the priests prepared the sacrifices and conducted priestly ministry.

And like a concentric circle, one circle outside of that, outside of that is the court of Israel, and the court of Israel is where Jewish men could enter for ministry for prayer, bring their sacrifices. The court of the women was outside of that. That's where the Jewish women could come and pray. The outer court beyond the Holy Place, the court of the priests, the court of Israel, the court of the women, the outer court, that's called the court of the Gentiles. That's where the Gentiles could come and pray, but they could go no further.

They could not go into any of the Jewish courts beyond their own. They were kept separate from the inner Jewish circles and courts by a short wall called a *soreg*. The *soreg* is roughly four and a half feet high. It's a dividing wall. It really was as the New Testament says. Paul says and refers to it in Ephesians chapter 2 is a wall of hostility.

To keep Gentiles in their place and from entering into the Jewish courts, entering into the inner court, the Jews posted a message there written in several languages, no stranger, by that they refer to a Gentile, no stranger is to enter within the balustrade, around the temple and enclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue.

Threatening message telling the Gentiles you're separate, you're unclean, you stay here. But they did have a place. They did have a place to come and pray. They did have a place to come and seek Yahweh, the God of Israel. They did have a place to come and see the, the sacrifices from a distance. God cares for the Gentiles. Israel as a people are to be a light for the

Gentiles, as Jesus says in this text. "This temple is to be a house of prayer for the nations."

Sadducees, not really believing any of that's important, the high priests, since they really have no regard for God, since the temple is not a place of worship for them, well, why not bring the merchants and the money changers in a bit closer? Maybe not into the exclusive locale of the Jews. I mean if the Jews saw that kind of thing happening in their courts. They'd have their heads.

But the unclean Gentiles? Nobody likes them anyway. No problem setting up business in Gentile areas. Business, it's conducted in the temple complex facilitated high priestly oversight; priestly oversight, priestly control over everything that happened there. That allowed the priest, the priest, the temple priesthood to set market rates, control competition, keep the money flowing. Good capitalism going on there.

For the service of their administrative and economic oversight, fees were charged, fees were collected, fees were

demanded. Priests who work for Annas, rather than serving the worship of God, rather than serving the spiritual needs of the people, rather than teaching the scripture, rather than ministering to the people in their spiritual needs, they were often more like tax collectors. Greedy, corrupt, even abusive.

Alfred Edersheim cites the Talmud, which records the rabbinic curse on, upon the high priestly families by a rabbi, including that of Annas, the high priest, quote "their treasurers, their sons in law who are assistant treasurers, while their servants beat the people with sticks." That's going on, from, can you imagine the elders, Board of Elders saying, Hey, we didn't get enough money from the offering this week, where's a few big guys? So let's get these guys, get some sticks, go out to their houses, beat the money out of them, bring it to us.

That's what's going on? That's what's going on. When you understand the scale and significance of these temple enterprises, the business, the commerce that's conducted there, the complex web of relationships. Changing loyalties, the amount

of money that's involved flowing through here, the greed that drives the whole thing. And then again, consider one man, Jesus, in John 2:15, he drove them all out of the temple.

He's stern with them. He's forceful. He's powerful. And yet at the same time we can see that he, filled with righteous indignation, as it says at the end of that text, "zeal for your house will consume me." Well, his, his zeal was not a undisciplined zeal. He was self-controlled the entire time. He had himself and his passions in check. This isn't rage, unbridled passion.

Quite remarkably that the text says that he stopped. He sees everything going on there. He stops, takes time to weave together a whip of chords. Jesus, what are you doing? Just, just hold on a second. Putting together the right tool for the right job. He's about to drive out the merchants, the money changers, buyers and sellers. Instead of a broom to clean up the place, he used a whip, swept the place clean.

It's kind of interesting, in John 2, that rather than overturn the bird cages, where all the pigeons and the doves were kept for sacrificial purposes, and remember it was Joseph and Mary, mother of Jesus, when Jesus was born, they took him at eight days to go to the temple. Remember what they had to buy for their sacrifice? They had no money, so they bought two pigeons. That's what they had to buy. So the pigeons were for the poor.

Rather than overturn those bird cages when he comes in and he's driving everything away, overturning all kinds of stuff when it comes to the bird cages, rather than risk damaging these more delicate creatures, the doves and the pigeons. Jesus, he spoke to the bird merchants. He spoke to them. He commanded them. Take these things away. Take them away. If this is a movie, there'd be a caption at the end of the credit says no animals were hurt in the cleansing of this temple.

All right, with that background in mind, let's go back to Luke 19:45. Luke 19:45, Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning of his ministry. Here he is doing it again at the end

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of his ministry. At the first temple cleansing Jesus said, "Stop making my Father's house into a house of trade, a house of commerce." Commercial activity of merchants and money changers, haggling over prices, disagreements, arguments over valuation, accusations of cheating. Then you've got the lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep. All these are distractions from worship.

As he said, the temple is to be a holy place. It's to be set apart from all the hustle and bustle of daily activity, set apart from all the sounds of commerce, all the interests of making money. It is to be different in the temple, and that's why it's to be different in church. Jesus made that point at the start of his ministry, driving everyone out, stamping his messianic authority on the temple complex, on temple operations. You think the house of Annas is over this? Think again.

And now, two years later, the Lord returns and the Emporium has returned as well. And it's worse than ever. It's more corrupt than ever. Mark 11:15 to 16, I'll read that again, "he entered the temple, began to drive out those who sold, those who

bought in the temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers, the seats of those who sold pigeons, and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple." Once again we see the Lord here being the Lord. We see the Messiah doing his messianic role, his duty.

He's in complete and total control. He's in charge. He's acting in a way that befits his messianic authority, that befits his role. It's what he should do. And he's decisive. He's stern, he's forceful, always in complete control. And again we can picture the scene. One man driven by love for God, full of righteous indignation, holy zeal and he's able to drive out thousands of men.

And these are no weak men. They're strong men. Powerful men. Connected men. Self-interested men. They've got what they love at their heart of hearts they love money, they love stuff, they love power, and they want to hold on to it with all their strength and might and he's able to drive them away.

We don't know whether or not he used a whip on this occasion. We tend to picture him using a whip because of John 2:15, but none of the synoptic Gospels tell us that he used a whip. What they do tell us, all three synoptic writers, they tell us that Jesus drove everyone out of the temple, and the word that all three of them use for drive out is the word *ekballo*, cast out.

This is the word used throughout the Gospels for exorcising demons. Casting them out. I don't think that's an accident. Jesus cast out, drove out this demonically inspired greed. Who has the greatest interest in the created world for corrupting the temple, for corrupting worship, for bringing dishonor to God, for mixing God with all the mundane things of life? It's the devil. It's demons. They rejoice in seeing the temple corrupt.

And that's why, beloved, they rejoice in seeing churches fall into marketing strategies, and fall into seeker sensitivity stuff, and everything that happens up on what they call the stage. It's like a concert or The Tonight Show. Bunch of jokes,

magic tricks, smoke and mirrors. Demons love that stuff. God hates it. Christ hates it.

He cleansed the temple of its corruption, exposes its love of filthy lucre, and identifies the idol called mammon. Whatever interests, motivations these wealthy, powerful, self-interested sinners might seek to protect, all of them just melt away. At the sight of his powerful presence, they all hurry to obey it, the force of his command. There is not one of us, not one of people of the likes of me and you, who can affect this kind of change anywhere.

Make no mistake, what Jesus does here does not give you authorization to go into your local Christian bookstore and start ripping up all the TD Jakes books and all the, you know, Joyce Meyer and all that stuff and throwing them off the shelf. That's not your commission. We've got a commission, Matthew 28, it's not that.

He has the, the only right, the only authority to do that kind of thing. And believe me, he will, when he returns, come

and clean house once again. But listen, one of the reasons he has the only right is he's got the only authority. He's got the only power. He is the Messiah and there is no other. We're not little messiahs. We point to Him. Let him do that work.

Well after we see what he did when he got to the temple, now we come to the reason. We've seen the Lord's attention, the Lord's intention, and now we see the Lord's, thirdly, the Lord's explanation. When we hear his explanation, why he did this, we understand and appreciate the true significance of what he did.

Verse 46 Jesus said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you," you, "have made it into a den of robbers." He cites two scriptures here, Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, and by citing scripture he uses that formulaic "It is written" statement to introduce it. And though he is the Messiah, though he bears the weight of divine authority, and therefore all of his words and all of his actions reveal the will that has a divine sanction.

Jesus cites Scripture in order to show that he is acting in perfect continuity with the revealed will of God. He wants everybody to see, this is what is written. What I'm doing is in complete accord with what is written. This is God's intention all along. Go read the text for yourself.

First part of the quotation comes from Isaiah 56 verse 7 says, "My house shall be called," you can turn there if you like Isaiah 56, "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." That's the point of the temple. The temple is a place to come and repent of sin. To come before the all seeing, all knowing God, unburden the guilty conscience to the honest humble confession of sin.

The temple is the place for seeking God's forgiveness, for looking to the atoning work of God through this shedding of innocent animal blood, all pointing to the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. For without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Then the Lord cites that portion of Isaiah 56:7. But as per usual, he is alluding to the entire prophetic message of Isaiah 56.

He doesn't want them, just a spot check, a reference, fact check him. He wants them to go and read the context. I'm not going to read the whole thing, but just listen to these verses from Isaiah 56 versus 6 and 7. "The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister to Him, to love the name of the Lord to be His servants. Everyone who keeps the sabbath does not profane it and holds fast my covenant. These I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings, their sacrifices will be accepted on," on, "my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

That's pointing to a future day, that's pointing to a millennial temple that you can read about in Ezekiel 40 to 48. That's a time coming when not only the Jews in the temple, the restored temple, but Gentiles as well will come from all their different nations to come and worship and offer sacrifice there before the Lord. Looking back to the once for all sacrifice for sins, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what the temple is for, to see the atonement provided. To offer up prayers of humble confession, to offer up prayers of gratitude and joy. That's not what the priests have been using it for. They're like those whom Isaiah identifies later on in that chapter. Whom the Lord indicts, in verses 9 to 12 of Isaiah 56, the priests are devouring beasts. Verse 9, they're blind watchmen without any knowledge. Verse 10, they're dumb dogs, unable to speak, to bark. They're mute. They're dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. They're lazy. The shepherds are false, verse 11, without understanding, each one pursuing his own gain. They say in verse 12, "Come, let's get wine, let's get something to drink. Let's fill ourselves with strong drink. Tomorrow will be like this day, only great beyond measure."

I've seen some pastors like that back in the emergent church movement all throwing up their steins of beer on their websites and showing that they're drinkers. Preaching sermons about drinking strong drink and beers and all that. That is not what Christians are to be known for. Just like they did in that day. So they do in our day. People don't change.

Luke portrays Jesus in his Messianic role, coming suddenly into his temple. He finds corruption in the place of absolution. He finds avarice in the place of forgiveness. He finds covetous idolatry in the place of humble worship. The people are, they're ignorant, they're unconverted, they're lost in their sins. Therefore they remain under the judgment of God, the condemnation of his holy wrath.

The temple is not to be a house of commerce. It's, it's not to be the bazaar of Annas to enrich a corrupt priesthood, to fund the extravagant, lazy lifestyles of theological liberals who refused to fear God, who refused to submit to His word and humble obedience. That's not, that's what the Lord found as he goes there, exactly this. Jesus tells the money changers, the merchants, buyers, sellers, people and priests alike. They've turned the God given, God ordained, house of prayer into something else entirely. They've turned it into a den of robbers.

Robbers. That's the word *lestes*. *lestes*, the word for a violent criminal who engages in the forceful illicit seizure of

property, often ambushing people in dark alleys, or on dark parts of a road, a bend in a road where they're hidden. Same word, by the way that Jesus used in the parable of the Good Samaritan about that poor traveler who was going from Jericho to Jerusalem. He fell among these *lestes*, the *lestes*, robbers. They stripped him, ruthlessly beat him, left him for dead.

So these are the kinds of thieves that are not just merely like fraudsters and con men, online scammers, you know, stealing by trickery and deceit, these are violent abusers, they've got no regard for human life. They're malicious criminals. They're merciless, pitiless, and brutal. Reference "den of robbers" comes from the prophecy of Jeremiah, so you can turn over to Jeremiah chapter 7, Jeremiah chapter 7.

The partial quotation comes from Jeremiah 7:11, but again, that short quotation is meant to allude to the whole prophecy from verses 1 to 15. Again, Jesus isn't just saying hey, go check your Bibles, check this little short reference and make sure I'm telling the truth. He's saying I want you to read the entire context and get the point.

Look at Jeremiah 7:1 to 4 that the word came to Jeremiah from the Lord. "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house. Proclaim there this word and say, hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your deeds, and I'll let you dwell in this place. Don't trust in these deceptive words. This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."

What's that remind you of, pagan Ephesians, right, in the city of Ephesus, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians, great is Artemis of the Ephesians." Working themselves up into a riotous spirit of anger and beating them and sending them out. Same spirit is here at work in the Jews about Yahweh's temple. They turn the temple itself into a chant, a mantra, to express this ignorant religious zeal. Same thing here.

Keep reading. Look at verse 5, "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice, one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless or

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the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place. And if you don't go after other gods to your own harm, then I'll let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave you of old and to your fathers forever.

"Behold, you trust in deceptive words, to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known. And then come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say 'We are delivered,' only to go on doing all these abominations. Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold I myself have seen it, declares the Lord, go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first and see what I did to it, because of the," of the, "evil of my people, Israel.

"And now because you've done all these things, declares the Lord. And when I spoke to you persistently and you didn't listen, when I called you and you didn't answer, therefore I will do to this house, that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and your fathers,

as I did to Shiloh. I will cast you out of my sight as I cast out all your kinsman, all the offspring of Ephraim.”

When he indicts them here in Jeremiah. Same thing that Jesus does in Luke 19. You can turn back there, by the way, but when he indicts them for turning his house into a den of robbers, he is not merely accusing them of corruption, greed, violent intent to rob people. I mean, it's at least that that's at least what he's saying. He's actually accusing them of something, something else.

What is a den of robbers? What's a den? The word actually is the word cave. So think robbers back then use caves to hide out in. So this is how robbers hide out. Robbers' den. It's the place to which robbers retreat after they've committed their crime. They go and ambush out on the road or in some dark place in the city, and then they retreat to a den, to a cave, to a place of what? Refuge.

They go there to escape the law, to elude justice. In the same way the religious leaders of the Jews, they've turned the

temple into their own refuge in order to avoid true justice. Rather than the temple being a place of open, humble, submissive prayer before God, these religious leaders, they've abandoned the entire point of the temple, starting with themselves.

They were not open. They were not humble. They were not submissive men of godly piety. They were crooks, criminals, robbers. And just as robbers use a cave as a hideout to run and hide, to duck accountability, to escape justice, to count the loot. Priests or religious leaders, Sadducees, Pharisees, backed up by the scribes that they hired to provide scholarly cover and academic respectability for all their views and opinions. They were using the temple complex to enrich themselves, and using titles and positions and wealth to erect barriers against scrutiny.

To create a bastion, a stronghold, a lair where they're shielded from all accountability. Where they could keep the people at a distance, temple had become their den. The place they could use to intimidate, and bully, and coerce, shakedown people, steal. Our Lord put his finger on the heart of the

problem right here. He did something about it, and they hated him for it. No wonder at the end of the week, he's going to be dead.

Now, why did the Lord do this? Is he just trying to like, stir it up because he's so prophetic? Is he trying to poke the religious leaders in the eye and just make him kind of mad? Is he trying to mix it up, stir it up? Provoke. Agitate? Is he an agitator? Provocateur.

No, the Lord is just being the Lord. He's just simply being himself. He's doing what's right. He's doing what's on his heart to do, and he leaves the results to God. What's on his heart to do? Love God, love people. He just does that according to his own role, according to what he's been assigned to do, called to do, chosen by God to do, gifted and equipped and sent by God to do, commissioned to do. He does that, and then he leaves the results to God. That brings us, when he loves God, loves his people, that brings us to the Lord's second concern here. I promise you, this one will be shorter.

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That Christ not only prepares the temple, secondly, Christ prepares the people. Christ prepares the people. Cleansing the temple is just the beginning. It just sets the necessary foundation for ministry, for teaching, helping the people know who God is, what he's like, what he actually requires. The people need truth, and perhaps that's why Luke has been very abbreviated in his identifying the action of Jesus at the temple to drive out those who bought, sold, and all the rest.

He's just trying to get past that, lest we get caught up as, as we just did, quite frankly, my fault, I'll take ownership and responsibility for that. He's trying to, Luke is trying to speed us along. Because the point, that's just the beginning. Clearing the temple, cleansing the temple, preparing the temple, that's just sets the stage for everything else that's coming in chapter 20, 21, 22, as he teaches, teaches, teaches.

Truth is the important thing. Truth is a crucial, critical, vital thing because when people know what God is like, when they know, as Isaiah did, that he is the thrice holy God who's majestic, and powerful, and frankly, for a sinner, frightening.

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You know, the God with whom you have to do, and you see yourself in stark contrast, that you're a sinner in thought, word, and deed. You haven't done everything that God's required you to do, and you've done a lot of things that he tells you not to do. Your conscience is troubled. You're overcome with the sense of your own sinfulness before God, and what does that do? Just, is that just to make you feel bad? No. It's to drive you to the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. It's what He wants.

As people become aware of the depth of their failure before God, as they recognize their poverty of spirit, they come to mourn over their sins. They start to hunger and thirst for righteousness that they lack. They long to know, "how can I be reconciled to this holy God." Jesus, very pleased to tell them.

Beginning at verse 47, we read he was teaching daily in the temple and then look down a couple verses later, chapter 20, verse 1, we read Jesus was teaching in the temple, the people in the temple, and preaching the gospel. He's evangelizing them. He declared the truth of God to them. He explained what it meant. He told him who God is, what he's like, what he requires of

them. They are convicted to their conscience, to the core of their being, and they, looking out for help, understand the implications of all the truth that they're hearing, looking out for help, Jesus visits them, Luke 20 verse 1, with the gospel.

We could say it this way, just kind of sum this all up, that he's pastoring these people. He loves to shepherd people. He's a shepherd at heart. He is the Good Shepherd. In fact, we come, you can flip over a page or two and see the end of the section, Luke 21:37 to 38, we get, Luke gives us a summary there. "Every day," it says, "he was teaching at the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mountain called Olivet. But early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him."

They keep thronging and coming, flocking together like sheep without a shepherd. He comes to teach them. He's acting as a Good Shepherd. He's telling them how they can lie down in green pastures. He's telling them where they could feed on good, strengthening food. He's leading them besides still water, so they can drink deeply, be refreshed. He wants to heal their

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wounds, clean them of all their filth and their idolatry. He wants to restore their souls so they can be converted by divine grace. Experience God's mercy, compassion, rest in God's Fatherly sovereign care.

Jesus is not here interested in reforming institutions. He's not interested in voting the right people into positions of political influence. He is the political influence. The government's on his shoulders. And as head of state, as chief politician, he comes in and deals with the heart problem, the sin issue. He's not interested in winning ground in the public square, winning friends and influencing people. He's not interested in turning the tide of public opinion and making society more religious, more amenable to God talk and religious talk.

Jesus is interested in heart and seeing people converted, set free from their sin, reconciled to God living in the freedom and power of holiness. And by the way, beloved, Grace Church, this is the same mission that he has given to us. Telling us, the Church, and the Great Commission, all authority in heaven

and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit, and then teaching them to observe, to obey, to follow all that I've commanded you, and behold, I'm with you always to the end of the age.

So verse 47 he's teaching daily in the temple until his arrest, until the spurious trials that condemned him, until his public execution on a cross. An outcome that is clearly foreshadowed in the rest of the verse because it says the chief priest, the scribes, the principal men of the people, were seeking to destroy him.

Who are the chief priests? High priestly family that includes the residing high priest at the time named Caiaphas. His father-in-law is Annas. Not only the individuals but also the priestly power that this whole family represents. The wide reaching influence of the charge over the entire priesthood at the temple. This family corrupted all religion.

The ruling priest, chief priest presided actually over the Sanhedrin, the, the council of seventy elders over Israel, ruling body of Jews in Jerusalem. Since the chief priest in this case, Caiaphas, since he, he belonged to the Sadducee party, he was a theological liberal. Anti-supernatural, didn't fear God, didn't believe in the resurrection. He ruled by pragmatism and by graft and greed.

Chief priests, scribes, who are they? As I mentioned, they're the academically trained scholars of the law of Moses. This made them, in that society, legal experts like lawyers, skilled at debate, rhetoric. Think of them again, like lawyers as prosecutors and defenders of religious things and civil things, civil matters, ceremonial matters. And they're always loyal here, as they're attached directly to the Pharisees or the scribes. They are, they are loyal to the religious establishment. That's who signed their paycheck.

Scribes, they use training in the law, not like the pious scribe Ezra, who had set his heart to study the law, Lord to do it, and then to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. They use

their knowledge, their skill in the law, to lay heavy burdens on the people. They were accomplices in a broad conspiracy of shepherding, a shepherding conspiracy to fleece the flock.

They're there to provide academic cover, scholarly cover, to justify the policies of the religious establishment, to uphold, strengthen the bureaucracy, make sure no one penetrated their legal defenses. Six times in Matthew 23, Jesus condemned the scribes. "Whoa to you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites." Why? Because they preach and don't practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, lay them on people's shoulders. They themselves, though, aren't willing to lift a single one of them with their little finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men.

That's the scribes. And what made these people so reprehensible, perhaps even worse than the Pharisees, worse than Sadducees, because they had studied the scripture. They had intellectual gifts, they had educational advantages, they knew the Word of God. And their deep, prolonged exposure in their academic training, to use that then to twist the Scripture. To

weaponize the Word of God in service of political and economic greed. Woe to them indeed.

Luke also tells us about this other group, the principal men of the people. They too are seeking to destroy Jesus. The principal men are laymen, but they are socially important laymen. They're from the upper-class caste of society, the proximity of their relationships to the religious establishment, their business interests in the temple merchant money changing operations. That put them in league with the chief priests. That made them connected people in town.

They knew all the right people, went to all the right parties, all the right homes, offered hospitality to their friends and ingratiated themselves. They were there to protect their investments and their financial interests. And that meant Jesus in his, this temple cleansing, prophetic zealotry, he's a threat that's got to be eliminated.

So there they are, chief priest, scribes, principal men of the people, the most respected men in their society. And by the

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way, they're not irreligious people. These are not people who are wanting to abandon the temple. These are very religious people. They're churchgoing people. But they are the religious establishment.

They are the power brokers of Jerusalem. They are united in murderous intent, seeking to destroy him. Any doubt about the Lord's indictment of the religious leaders as robbers, as if maybe robbers, violent criminals, is too strong of a word. It's removed right here, isn't it? They're seeking to destroy him. *Apollymi*, it's a word that means to kill, to destroy, to ruin. One translation renders this, they're planning to assassinate him. They're agents, remember Revelation 9, agents of *Apollyon*. *Apollyon* is a word that comes from this verb, it means destroyer.

False shepherds, they're thieves that have come in only to steal and to kill and destroy. They think they own these sheep and they intend to keep them so they can continue fleecing the flock. Making money off the wool, making money off the slaughter. And they'll destroy anyone who gets in their way.

So what's stopping them? Ironically, it's the very people they're taking advantage of, that's who's stopping them. Says, "The chief priests, scribes, principal men and people seeking to destroy him. But they didn't find anything they could do for all the people are hanging on his words." They're hanging on his words. It's the only use of this verb in the New Testament; hanging on, portrays someone who's listening earnestly, almost, almost paralyzed, arrested, held in suspense because the speaker to whom they're listening; so captivating they're held spellbound. Can you blame them?

Think of all your favorite preachers, all your favorite teachers, politician, Ronald Reagan, very good at speaking. All the speechwriters, all the people who speak, all the people, who. Take all those compelling public speakers and roll them all up into one. The most dynamic, captivating of communicators, can you imagine you'd want to listen to that guy rolled up into one, rather than Jesus? I'd rather spend two minutes to hear the Lord Jesus Christ than all the speakers of the world, with all the eloquence of angels and men. The expression though, it does not equate to conversion. These people are not truly converted.

Well, maybe some of them are, maybe some of them are coming to Christ in faith.

But we know throughout the Gospels, many strong expressions like this, it'd indicate a strong admiration of Jesus' teaching, and yet they fall short of true conversion. His most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew, wraps that up by saying when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he's teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. There's no one more compelling than Jesus Christ.

That's why we've been at this study since 2015. Still, don't mistake admiration for conversion. Won't be long before these same people who cried Hosanna will soon be shouting "crucify him, crucify him." Jesus knows that, as he sees the people before him, he knows what they're of, what they're about, what they're like, and what does he do? Does he turn and walk away? No. He draws near, keeps on teaching them, keeps on loving them, keeps on ministering to their needs.

Luke focuses us on his teaching ministry in verse 47, his gospel proclamation in chapter 20 verse 1. Matthew adds though that the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. He continues to preach the gospel and to heal, to use the power and the authority that he has to help hurting people, casting out their demons, dealing with their diseases, but also telling them the truth that will penetrate into their souls and ultimately and finally save them.

So in spite of the shallowness of the crowd, in spite of their fickleness, in spite of knowing that they will soon turn on him, Jesus, he loves them and he loves them by teaching them and by proclaiming the gospel. He stays put there in the temple, considers the best investment of his time in this final week is to teach the truth. If you were told that you have one week to live, how would you use it? Grab a good meal, you know, go dust off the will. Make sure that's sent around. Those are good things.

Jesus wanted to make sure that he preaches, teaches, tells the truth. That's what he's done on this occasion, as he comes

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to Jerusalem, as he comes suddenly into his temple, Malachi 3:1. So much to observe here and to admire and to praise in the zeal and the love of our Savior. He loves God. He wants his name to be honored, his temple to be holy, and his intent to glorify himself. The Father glorifying himself and reconciling sinners. That intention of God, that clear purpose of God, need to be protected, shielded, advocated for, proclaimed.

Christ loves sinners. He wants sinners to draw near and set aside all worldly concerns and common and mundane matters in order that as they come into the house of the Lord they can clear away all distraction. So they learn an undiluted preaching and teaching from Christ on God's Word. So we can pray to God in faith, humble repentance, find forgiveness in the work of God's atoning grace. And that's the take away for us, isn't it?

Again, if you had one week to live, how would you use the days? This is the one to whom I will look, Isaiah 66:2 says. And again he says this, in Isaiah 66, "to those who have the spirit of 'this is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the

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temple of the Lord.' " We're protected in the institution. We are the people of God because we come here and offer sacrifices.

God says those sacrifices don't matter to me. This is the one to whom I'll look. It's he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my Word. For ourselves beloved, for others, we have to put the priority on the Word of God. We have to know the Word of God, study it, saturate our minds with it. We have to memorize it, reflect on it, meditate on it day and night. So we're like trees planted by streams of water, yielding our fruit in our season. We need our minds renewed by the Word of God, our lives transformed by its power because of the power of the Word of God, transform our lives, puts the power of that message on display. If teaching and preaching the truth was foremost in the heart of our Lord in His last week, it ought to be our chief concern as well. Amen?

Our Father we are so grateful for this clear teaching instruction from the Lord Jesus Christ and seeing his heart on display, his love for you, his love for people. We thank you that you have sent him to love us. In fact, you have loved us,

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Father, from before the foundation of the world. And you've awakened us, each in our own time according to your own will and good pleasure, that we might be born again to this living hope.

We pray that we would have the heart and the concern, the priority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Teach the truth of your word to people so the people's consciences can be informed, so they can be convicted of their sins, convicted of sin and righteousness and coming judgment, and so they can desire salvation, be awakened to their need before you, a holy God, so they can look to Christ and be saved. Please use us in that way, Father, for your glory. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.