

1. Jesus Loves Passionately and Powerfully

- a. Began to throw out the people who commercialized worship
 - i. The sellers were within the Temple!
 1. What were they doing?
 - a. Selling sacrifices to offer to the Lord
 - i. Matthew and Mark mention pigeons or doves
 1. These were birds that were used to offer sacrifice in place of himself due to sin (Lev 5:7 for example)
 2. The birds were particularly for the poor who were not wealthy enough to have livestock.
 - ii. Thus, we see, again, the “robbery” that Jesus mentions has to do with the poor being taken advantage of and treated unfairly by the powerful and the wealthy
 - b. Exchanging Greek and Roman coinage for Jewish coins for the Temple tax
 - i. There was an exchange fee for this service that went to the priest’s household (cf. Lev 5:15-16)
 1. The interpretation of this law gave incentive for dishonest priests and leaders to point out the sins of the people so that they might gain a fifth of the restitution sacrifice
 - ii. Therefore, this exchange was set up in the Temple to make sure that nobody missed the opportunity to exchange their coinage (for a fee) and be holy to the Lord
 1. This system itself is not evil, but we see that it has taken precedence over prayer and the true pursuit of holiness
 2. It seems as though the Temple service was not set up for the sake of the people’s access to the Lord, but to use the people’s desire for the Lord and make a profit.
 2. Where were they set up?
 - a. “in” the Temple
 - b. They were not outside the walls of the Temple, but were inside.
 - c. Presumably, they were not inside the holy place, where the congregation gathered to worship and the sacrifices performed
 - d. Therefore, they must have been right inside the gates, along the outer courts of the Temple, *where the Gentiles were allowed to gather to worship!*
 - b. Jesus is prophetically condemning the nation’s idolatry in this way
 - i. Calling the Temple a “den of robbers”

1. Literally, a “cave” where thugs would hide out to assault and rob passersby
2. They brought the idol of greed into the place set aside for worship and prayer
- ii. This is a direct quote from Jeremiah 7:11, a passage lamenting Israel’s idolatry and pursuit of other gods while still attending the Temple and asking God to deliver
 1. “declaring ‘peace’ when there is no peace”
 2. This is a way of saying that God doesn’t see sin as a big deal, and is happy with them when they pursued it
 3. This is why Jesus weeps in the preceding passage – he knows this deception, the hardened hearts (Jer 7:24), and the coming doom on Jerusalem
- iii. Jesus is not only condemning the leaders here, but also the people
 1. Mark notes that he wouldn’t let people into the Temple
 2. He sees the duality of their hearts and calls them out strongly to reject their idols and half-hearted worship
- iv. This act of physical force was an act of taking control and assuming authority within the Temple
 1. It would be seen as an act of blasphemy by the Temple leadership
 2. It would be seen as arrogant and controlling and “over-reacting”
- c. Jesus isn’t nice
 - i. Love isn’t always nice, but it is always full of truth
 1. “Niceness” – does and says what makes people happy with me
 2. “Kindness” – does and says what makes people joyful in God
 - a. Sometimes, the kind thing to do is hurtful.
 - b. Sometimes the light exposes the darkness, the fire burns away the dross, the Word of God slays our self-righteousness and shatters the reputation that we’ve built up until our nice, neat, and cozy life crumbles to a heap of absolute neediness
 - c. This is the kindness of God!
 - ii. He is patient when He is personally attacked, but gets powerfully protective in word and deed when others are being harmed, dishonored, or kept from the Lord
 1. This was about the knowledge of God and the worship that belongs to Him
 2. People were made to worship God rightly, and Jesus gets pretty upset when others keep people away from knowing Him rightly and worshipping Him fully
 - a. “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you pretenders! For you shut the door of heaven in men’s faces...” (Matt 23)
 - b. Sometimes love drives people out b/c of this
 - iii. Love acts powerfully when people are being kept from nearness to the Lord
 1. The goal of the extreme action is the worship of the Lord
 2. Any hard words or actions that are not moving in this direction are useless

2. Jesus Preaches Life to His People at the Cost of Great Suffering

- a. Jesus was now teaching daily in the heart of the Jewish nation, right in the Temple, which was the power center for Jewish life.
 - i. He is preaching and teaching, revealing the glorious gospel of the Son of God who came to rescue, redeem, and restore the broken
 - ii. He is preaching the Kingdom of God and its entrance through absolute dependence upon Him as the Savior-King
 - iii. He is preaching the means of life: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Nobody comes to the Father but through Me.”
- b. This brought about great threat to the powerful people of the day, who thought that by destroying Jesus they would be doing the work of God (cf. John 16:2).
 - i. The Pharisees fear the people more than they fear God
 1. If they truly believed that Jesus was a threat to God’s people or a threat to the doctrine of God, and they loved God and His people, they should have acted regardless of political pressure
 2. They didn’t, which shows that they were worried more about their own honor than God’s honor (or their perception of God’s honor)
 - ii. There is nothing quite so antagonistic as challenging somebody’s 1) religion, 2) culture, and 3) economics/wealth with the need for change
 1. Jesus moves to purify the use of all three of these things in order to bring them in line with the revealed word of God.
 2. We should expect the same, and move forward like Him to see these things purified in the Church as well (Temple)
 - a. Jesus is not trying to change Rome, but He is trying to change God’s people
 - b. In the same way, we are not called to alter our secular society in this manner (overturning and whip-making), but we are called to overturn what needs to be overturned in the Church when it settles into our Church culture
- c. Jesus is still in control of his destiny and has entrusted Himself to His Father to do what is right, good, and dangerous.
 - i. He marched right into the heart of the power structure of his culture and started offending people with the truth, knowing that it would bring his suffering, his rejection, his alienation, his torture, his death
 - ii. Very prophetic – much like the OT prophets, bringing the hard truth that made people mad in a way that “poked” them and pricked their hearts, and ended up getting them exiled or killed

3. Jesus Protects the House of the Lord, the Primacy of Prayer, and the Inclusion of Needy Outsiders.

- a. Protection - Jesus draws a bottom line
 - i. House of the Lord - My Father's house

1. Jesus calls the Temple “My Father’s house”
2. This is significant in two primary ways:
 - a. He is acting as the Son – with ownership of the house
 - b. He is claiming this unique position to cleanse and reorient the Temple to the way that God wants it
- ii. Nations - the outer courts of the Temple were reserved for the Gentiles and would have been the most likely place that sellers had set up to sell sacrificial animals
 1. Jesus was protecting the rights of the Gentiles to come and pray
 2. The context of Jesus' words are from Isaiah 56:6-8, and concerns the "foreigners who come to the Lord", "the peoples", and the Lord who "gathers the outcasts of Israel".
 3. The point is that people, all people, come to the Lord in absolute dependence, not with sacrifices as bargaining chips or hush payments, but with humble requests for mercy and to seek His face, not His favors.
- iii. Prayer - the intent of the Temple is to seek His face, not His favors
 1. If Jesus’ words about making the Temple a “den of robbers” was the negative prophetic word, this is the positive prophetic word regarding the house of the Lord
 2. The Temple wasn’t so much a place of business as it was a place where its primary intentions were swallowed up by rote observances and half-hearted religiosity condoned and encouraged passively by Temple leaders
 3. The primary purpose for the Temple is to reconcile Man to God, to remove the obstacles of sin and guilt, to reveal the great glory of God’s mercy and provision, and to commune with and depend upon the Lord for all things through prayer and the receiving of grace by the means of sacrifice and cleansing that the people might pursue holiness as they know God
 - a. Should this not also be the intent of the Church, the house of the Lord (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21)?
 - b. Should not our souls and our gatherings be filled with dependent prayer in the presence of the Lord?
 - c. Do we not "do business" and planning way too often and pray way too little?
 - d. Do we not make our observances rote and half-hearted? Do we functionally depend upon the Lord when we gather?