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The Lord Is In His Holy Temple

LUKE 19:45-48

Introduction

1. I believe that many of us have become desensitized in our reading of God's Word.
2. By this I mean that were we physically present when some of the things of which we read took place, we might have reacted in shock or at the very least great surprise.
3. One such episode would have been Jesus' cleansing of the temple.
4. Imagine a large venue, the Court of the Gentiles, where there are cattle, sheep and turtle doves in various pens and cages.
5. At each booth are those tasked with selling these animals.
6. Also, there are other tables where men are busy exchanging foreign currency with the proper number of temple shekels.
7. Suddenly, Jesus begins turning over the tables, opening the pens and cages and driving both men and animals out of the temple.
8. People are scrambling everywhere to gather up the monies which have been scattered across the ground.
9. Others are chasing down sheep and cattle, but giving up on the doves which have flown away.
10. How would you have reacted to all of this?
11. This is the scene before us as Jesus enters Jerusalem on the Monday (Mark 11:11-15) preceding His crucifixion.

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I. His Cleansing Of His Temple

“Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, “It is written, ‘And My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a robbers’ den.” (Luke 19:45–46, NASB95)

A. WHAT JESUS FOUND: “A ROBBERS’ DEN”

“Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple.” (Mark 11:15–16, NASB95)

1. What Jesus faced when He walked into the outer Court of the Gentiles there in the Temple was the result of years of commercial abuse.
2. The religious establishment (i.e., high priest, Sadducees) had cornered the market on the required sacrificial animals and changing of foreign money into coins acceptable for temple offerings.
3. In the Law which God had given to His people at Mount Sinai, He had commanded them, “You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 17:1, NASB95)
4. Some worshipers brought their animals with them when they came to Jerusalem for Passover, others opted to buy their sacrificial animal at the Temple.
5. This was one area where extortion was rampant:
 - a. Because no worshiper was to sacrifice an animal with “a blemish or any defect” each animal was inspected upon entrance into the Temple.
 - b. The inspectors were notorious for finding “blemishes” and “defects” in the animals brought from outside and thus forced the worshiper to purchase an animal from the “approved” sellers in the Temple.
 - c. Of course the animals within the Temple were sold at a premium, sometimes as much as ten times the amount for which they could be

purchased in the villages outside Jerusalem.

6. The other area of extortion involved the money changers:
 - a. The Law also required every Israelite male to contribute a “half shekel . . . to the Lord to make atonement for [themselves] (Exodus 30:12-16).
 - b. A number of monies were utilized in trade throughout Palestine — Roman, Grecian, Tyrian, Phoenician, etc.
 - c. However, because the Jewish half-shekel was the only money allowed for the “temple tax,” as it came to be known, money changers were brought into the temple to change the foreign monies into acceptable Temple currency.
 - d. Of course, the money changers charged a “nominal fee” for their services.
 - e. It has been estimated that a typical money-changer could make a profit of somewhere between \$250,000 and \$260,000 in today’s dollars per year.
7. You and I can only imagine the frustration this caused for so many faithful Jews who came to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship God and remember their deliverance from Egypt.
8. Added to this was the noise — Cattle lowing, sheep bleating, vendors and money changers in arguments with worshipers, not to mention the smell — it was impossible for a non-Jew to pray and meditate.
9. Jesus immediately “began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.”
10. As He did so, He quoted from a statement by the prophet Jeremiah, who had, almost 700 years earlier stood at the entrance of Solomon’s temple and called upon God’s people to amend their ways.
11. The Israelites in that day believed because God’s Temple was there in Jerusalem, nothing would happen to the city.

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12. Through Jeremiah, God had asked them, “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after

other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’ — that you may do all these abominations?” (Jeremiah 7:9-10, NASB95).

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13. He then added, “Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I even I have seen it,” declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 7:11, NASB95).
14. Now, Jesus was telling these sellers and money changers that they had again made God’s holy temple a robbers’ den.
15. This was never what God intended, but what had He intended?

Slide 4**B. WHAT GOD INTENDED: “A HOUSE OF PRAYER”**

“And He began to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ ”” (Mark 11:17, NASB95)

1. God’s intention was that His temple be “a house of prayer for all the nations.”
2. As Jesus spoke these words He directed the people back to the words of the prophet Isaiah who had preceded Jeremiah by 100 years.

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3. Through Isaiah, God spoke of what He intended for His temple to become (Isaiah 56:6-7).

“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
 To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord,
 To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath
 And holds fast My covenant;
 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain
 And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
 Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;
 For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”

(Isaiah 56:6–7, NASB95)

4. Isaiah wasn't the first one to speak such words.

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5. Originally, it was Solomon who prayed for this when he dedicated the temple over 200 years before Isaiah (1 Kings 8:41-43).

“Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name.” (1 Kings 8:41–43, NASB95)

6. God had always intended for all people throughout the ancient world to come to know Him and reverence Him even as did His people Israel.
7. Jesus knew that only when the distractions had been driven out could foreigners experience the true purpose of God's temple — a house of prayer, a place where one might meditate upon the one true God.

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II. His Teaching In His Temple

A. THE PEOPLE WERE CAPTIVATED BY HIS WORDS

“And He was teaching daily in the temple . . . all the people were hanging on to every word He said.” (Luke 19:47a–48b, NASB95)

1. The Temple has played an important part in Luke's gospel:
 - a. It was in the Holy Place, next to the Holy of Holies, that the angel Gabriel had announced to Zacharias that his wife, Elizabeth, would bear the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20).
 - b. It was in the courts of the Temple that the aged Simeon had taken

- the infant Jesus into his arms and praised God (Luke 2:25-32).
- c. It was also in the Temple that Jesus as a twelve year old boy first spoke of His mission: “Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49).
 - d. Now, after cleansing the Temple, Jesus utilized it every day during the week leading up to His crucifixion as His own personal classroom.
2. At the end of chapter 21 of His gospel, Luke tells us “ during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him” (Luke 21:37-38, NASB95).
 3. As Luke tells us here in our text, “all the people were hanging on to every word He said” (Luke 19:48b).
 4. Can you imagine what this must have been like?
 - a. People arriving at the temple early in the morning for no other reason than to listen to Jesus.
 - b. People hanging on to every word He spoke.
 5. God’s Word still has the power to captivate us today, *if* we will give ourselves to its study.

Slide 8**B. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WANTED TO DESTROY HIM**

“ . . . the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, and they could not find anything that they might do” (Luke 19:47b-48a, NASB95)

1. There were others that week who did not have the same devotion to our Lord’s teaching.
2. Those people were “the chief priests, the scribes and the leading men among the people” (v. 47b).
3. These were the very people who should have recognized Jesus for who He

truly was — the Son of God, the Messiah.

4. However, their own jealousy had blinded them to the teaching of Scripture and the reality that stood before them.
5. They had one goal — “to destroy Him.”
6. But they could not find a way to do it, because it would create an uproar among the people.
7. Jesus’ hour had not yet come. Until then, they could do nothing.
8. Still today there are those who want nothing to do with our Lord or His Word.
9. You and I, like Peter and John of old, must continue to tell others that “there is salvation in no one else” — “there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

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III. His Presence In His Temple

A. THE CHURCH IS HIS TEMPLE

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17, NASB95)

1. All of this brings us to today.
2. Where is God’s temple today? Does it still exist?
3. The answer is ‘Yes, it still exists,’ but not in some physical building to which we can point.
4. No, God’s temple is found elsewhere, in His people.

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5. In the apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus, he speaks of a new temple which God is building:
 - a. In 2:20, he tells us that Christ Jesus is “the corner stone.”
 - b. In that same verse he points out that this temple’s foundation includes “the apostles and prophets” (v. 20a).

- c. Then in verse 21, Paul adds, “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:21-22, NASB95).
6. In Paul’s first letter to the brethren in Corinth, he asked them a question (1 Corinthians 3:16).

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“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16, NASB95)

7. In the next verse, verse 17, Paul adds a warning.

“If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17, NASB95)
8. God takes very seriously the holiness of the temple in which He chooses to dwell.
 - a. If we stop being the holy people God has called us to be.
 - b. If people seeking to know God, become His people and faithfully follow Him are turned away from Him because of our actions or attitude, God will judge us.

Slide 11**B. OUR INDIVIDUAL BODIES ARE HIS TEMPLE**

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20, NASB95)

1. Not only does God consider this congregation to be His temple, but each of us as individual Christians.
2. Three chapters later, in this same letter to the saints in Corinth, Paul asks another question (1 Corinthians 6:19).

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is

in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ” (1 Corinthians 6:19, NASB95)

3. When we obeyed the Gospel and put our Lord on in baptism, our lives changed forever.
4. The price which Christ paid for our eternal salvation was in that moment applied to our sins — we became His forever more.
5. Now that we belong to Him, we must make it our goal to glorify Him in every aspect of our lives.
6. Every day, we seek to live for Him, learn of Him and draw others to Him.
7. He is now our everything, our all.

Conclusion

1. That week so long ago there were two groups of people in the temple:
 - a. One group couldn't get enough of Him, they hung on His every word.
 - b. The other couldn't get rid of Him fast enough, they wanted nothing to do with Him.
2. The question for each of us this morning is this — “To which group do I belong?”
3. There is no middle group, no neutral ground where someone might say, “I don't want to commit either way.”
4. Jesus doesn't give us that option.
5. Will you come to Him today?