

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE PEOPLE

Covenant Presbyterian Church

MARK 11:11-26

17 March A.D. 2013

Introduction

1. Overview of Mark—It is the story of Jesus. As we go through it, we are letting the gospel (good news!) tell the gospel. Jesus, the Messiah King, is ushering in His Kingdom in unexpected ways. And He is gathering a people to Himself.
2. Last week—Jesus enters Jerusalem (the triumphal entry) on His way to the cross. The crowd wanted deliverance, not repentance.
3. Today—Another sandwich/quesadilla passage→fig tree—temple—fig tree.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree (v. 11-14)

1. Jesus, on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, looks for fruit on a fig tree. Seeing none, He curses the tree, saying, “May no one ever eat fruit of you again!” (v. 14)
2. Why does Jesus do this? → A prophetic act used to get attention and to expose a far more tragic fruitlessness.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (v. 15-18)

1. The temple was to be a house of prayer. It was to be a place of worship, devotion and being in the presence of God.
 - a. It had become a place of buying and selling. Lots of activity but no worship. The busyness had pushed out the presence of God.
 - b. The presence of God was supposed to be the central thing, and it was no longer the central thing.
Application: Does any of this sound familiar? Has your life become so busy you no longer practice the presence of God? What about your family, home group, ministry, our church? When will we stop (and why do we not stop?) to be in the presence of God?
Opportunity: prayer and fasting night this Thursday, March 21, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Not a commercial, a call to life!
2. The temple was to be for all the nations.
 - a. Throughout Scripture we see God’s heart for the nations. This was nothing new.
 - Genesis 12:3—*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*
 - Psalm 67:4,5,7—*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy...Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee... God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.*
 - Isaiah 56:6-8—See end of outline
 - Matthew 28:19-20—*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...*
 - Revelation 7:9—*...and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues...*
 - b. The temple itself was built to be a beacon for the nations—built on a major trade route, built on a mount, a magnificent structure on 35 acres, main building was 350 ft. x 575 ft. x 150 ft. The largest area was the court of the Gentiles.
 - c. But all this commerce and activity was preventing the worship of the Gentiles. There was even a wall erected between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the women to keep the Gentiles out. There was no place for the nations to gather and worship.

Application: What walls have you erected to keep the nations from gathering? Note: We do this actively and passively. What are you doing with Rod’s challenge from last week that Jesus has “other sheep that are not of this fold”? Are you doing anything to pursue and gather them? When is the last time you have talked to

anyone about Christ, invited someone to church, or hosted an introduction to Jesus Bible study? Jesus' heart is for the nations. Is yours?

3. The temple had become a robbers' den.
 - a. Jesus now goes full frontal assault. The people and their leaders were using the temple as a place they could hide their ungodliness, injustice and oppression.
 - b. "Den of robbers" → Think a cave where thieves would hide after committing their crime.
 - c. The people were using their religious system to mask their rebellion and unbelief.
 - d. See Jeremiah 7:1-11
 - e. The leaders clearly heard this word of judgment as they "heard this and began seeking how to destroy Him." (v. 18)

Application: How do you/we hide behind your/our religious system and continue in our rebellion and unbelief? Do you get angry or repentant when Jesus disrupts your religious system?

The Fig Tree, Part 2 (v. 19-26)

1. Jesus and the disciples pass by the fig tree again and it has withered from the roots up → This was a symbol of the judgment that would come upon the temple and the dead religious system that came with it. Jesus was not just cleansing the temple; He was abolishing it (Mark 13:2). Jesus and His people would be the new temple (John 4:21-24; I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20).
2. Why does Jesus respond to Peter in the way He does? Because His purpose was to cleanse much more than the temple. Jesus was cleansing His people:
 - a. Have faith in God (v. 22)—at its root, Israel's failure/sin was that of unbelief. Jesus calls us to greater faith in God. He is strong. He is mighty. He is with us. He is for us. He loves us. There is nothing too difficult for Him. Is this not a God worthy of our faith?
 - b. Know the power in His presence (v. 23-24)—Our God is a mountain-moving God. Do you really believe that? Then why do you ask so little of Him? Our faithlessness and prayerlessness are evidence of self-exalting and God-belittling hearts.
 - c. Know the grace in His presence (v. 25-26)—Our God is a God of grace. He forgives our transgressions. Ought we not forgive each other? The one who has truly tasted of His grace is the one who is quick to extend it to others.

Isaiah 56:6-8

⁶ "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;

⁷ 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."

⁸ The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, "Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered."

Jeremiah 7:1-11

⁷ The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ² "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house and proclaim there this word and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!'" ³ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place." ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' ⁵ For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, ⁶ if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, ⁷ then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

⁸ "Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. ⁹ 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, ¹⁰ 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? ¹¹ 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.