

Christ Cleanses the Temple, Part 1

Luke 19:45-48

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.

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.

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 begin 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.

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 he 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 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 then 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 to 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. 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 and 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.

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, taken 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. And the practice of collecting this temple tax, half shekel for each male in Israel, whether poor or rich. No matter what your means, we're, 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 Tyrannian 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 were 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 well, 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*,

*hieron*, 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 *hieron*.

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.

That's where Zechariah was, is 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. 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 within, 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. The business that'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.” What'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.

So 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 at 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, and 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 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 we 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 exercising 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. 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.