



Luke 19:41–48: Jesus' Care for the Temple ministry.

Opening Discussion: Did you ever give a gift to a child in a big box, and the child was more interested in playing with the box? How did that make you feel? Were you tempted to just give them cardboard for their next gift? Were you tempted to push them to play with the toy? What in Christianity today might seem the same to God in our distractions?

- Connect the Context: Jesus has just entered Jerusalem to a mixed reception. Upon seeing the temple, he has another vision (just like the colt) that reminds us of his providence.
- What Jesus wanted to teach in this moment was meant to remind those serving in the temple, attending the temple and doing business at the temple that **God was more interested in what was taking place in the hearts of the people than the trappings of the temple.**
- **[41] And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, [42] saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43] For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”**
 - According to Josephus, In 66ad General Vespasian was sent by Nero to conquer Judea which was rebelling against Rome. 2 years later, Nero died, and Vespasian returned to Rome, leaving his son Titus to finish the task. In 70ad, Titus besieged Jerusalem, and finally broke through the walls. The battle became so bloody, the Romans started lighting everything on fire, and slaughtering everything in sight, including women and children. One of the soldiers through a torch into the temple, and before Titus could even stop his own soldiers, the temple was being looted and burning to the ground. Titus tried to stop the looting and burning, but it was to far gone to be stopped.¹

¹ Josephus. *War of the Jews*. (3.1.3) Sourced from *Josephus-Complete Works*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, Ninth Printing, 1971)

- What's amazing is that it was never Titus' intention to destroy the temple, but it was part of God's ultimate plan to take the focus from the physical condition of man, and place it into the spiritual through the work of the Holy Spirit. God designed the destruction of the temple so that the church would be built on the blessing of the Gospel, not the blessing of buildings and alters.

When we see in scripture that God sovereignly planned for the destruction of His own temple, what do you immediately think about that? Does that truth conjure feelings of unease or confidence in Christ's work? Why?

- **Hebrews 9:11–14 [11] But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. [13] For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, [14] how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (ESV)**
- God was willing to sacrifice his anointed temple in order for Israel and all the nations to understand that Jesus was meant to dwell in our hearts, not merely in a temple!²
- After weeping over Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courtyard and saw something he could not tolerate.

Question: What other scriptures come to mind when we talk about being the true temple of Christ's dwelling?

- **[45] And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, [46] saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."**
- Leon Morris pointed out in his commentary: "From Mark we find that this incident took place on the day following the triumphal entry (Mark 11:11f., 15). Jesus found traders in the temple. Some were changing money (only Tyrian coinage was accepted for the temple offerings, and other coins had to be changed into this

² Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48, 17:24

currency); others were selling sacrificial animals. They were apparently plying their trade in the court of the Gentiles, the only place in the temple where a non-Jew could go to pray and to meditate. If the temple system was to carry on it was necessary that such facilities be provided. But it was not necessary that they should be in the temple precincts, and it is this to which Jesus took exception. He began to drive out those who sold. Luke does not mention those who bought nor the money-changers, but Matthew and Mark tell us that he dealt with them as well. Jesus upbraided the traders by pointing out the difference between their dishonesty (cf. Jer. 7:11) and the true nature of the temple as a house of prayer (cf. Isa. 56:7).”³

- Let’s put ourselves into the shoes of the Israelites of that day: you want to offer a sacrifice, but you don’t want to drag a goat all the way up to the temple so you decide to buy one at the temple market but you have to buy one with the right kind of money (Hebrew coins or coins from Tyre⁴).⁵ You find a money exchange booth and exchange your money for the going exchange rate, plus a handling fee, but you don’t mind because it’s so convenient and easy. Have you ever tried to drag a stubborn goat, or carry two flopping pigeons through busy city streets.
- Everyone was happy, making money and having a good ole time but the problem is that no one was doing what they were there to do. NO ONE WAS CONNECTING TO GOD! No one was in a spirit of prayer and worship. It made Jesus indignant!

Question: What distractions or frustrations exist in your own context that make it difficult to just focus on and worship Christ?

- Jesus was not just expressing his own discouragement over what was taking place, he was also quoting scripture.
 - **Jeremiah 7:8–11 [8] “Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. [9] Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, [10] and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say,**

³ Leon Morris. *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed.* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.) 45-46

⁴ Josephus. *The Antiquities of the Jews* (20.205)

⁵ David Gooding. *According to Luke: A New Exposition of the Third Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 314

‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? [11] 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.

- The sadness in this story is that it is happening in so many churches every single Sunday today! We attend when it’s convenient and we give if it’s convenient. We are feeling blessed because we know church is here if and when we need it but are we blessing God with with flippant attitude towards gathering for worship?
- **[47] 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, [48] but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.**

Question: In your own opinion, why do you think this moment triggered such rage in the hearts of the religious leaders?

- This was not a popular message for Jesus to preach and it was the beginning of the motivated plot to see Jesus put to death.
- It is not a popular message for today either, but here is our application for this morning:
 - **God’s purpose is to bring spiritual redemption, not physical comfort. The church exists for the purpose of being a blessing to God and others, not being blessed.**

Discussion: What are the “creature comforts” that exist in a first world context that are not truly necessary for a Sunday gathering? If God removed those comforts, what would happen to the American church in your estimation? Let’s take this one step further: What if the American church began to suffer true persecution to the level of physical danger? How would that affect our churches?

- We are God’s agents of change in this world. We aren’t here to be the frozen chosen. We are here to represent God to a lost and dying world. In fact, let me return to Jeremiah’s prophetic words that precede verses 8-11 quoted by Jesus!
- **Jeremiah 7:1–7 [1] The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: [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 men of Judah who enter 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 these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

- Jeremiah reminded Israel that the temple of the LORD was to be a place of good deeds, not just a big building! What were those good deeds? That is what he pointed out before calling it a den of robbers.
- **[5] “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, [6] if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, [7] then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.**
 - Jeremiah said not to oppress sojourners, those who were foreigners seeking to worship YWHY. There was actually a courtyard set aside specifically for gentile worshippers.⁶ This was important because Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations of the whole world revealing God’s glory.⁷
 - Jeremiah also reminded the temple attenders that the needs of orphans and widows were important as well.
 - Jeremiah ended his imperative commands by reminding them not to practice idolatry.
- **This sounds just like Micah’s prophecy against Israel!**
- **Micah 6:8 [8] He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**
- **Micah echoed Jeremiah’s imperative truth in a more succinct way:**
 - **Act justly in this world.**
 - Similar to accepting the presence of sojourners, our call as a church is to be ready to receive those seeking truth. Are we ready for who God will bring through our doors?
 - **Practice kindness in this world.**

⁶ <https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/judgment-temple>

⁷ Isaiah 56:7

- Similar to caring about orphans and widows, our call as a church is to seek ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the four counties we have been called to reach.
- Remember, our community will not care what we know about God if they don't know that we care about them.
- **Practice humility in relationship with God.**
 - Similar to not going after idols, it is important that we are a church that doesn't create idols out of our own desires and comforts. We are to bless God, not to seek a blessing.
 - Humility isn't thinking less of ourselves, it is thinking of ourselves less!⁸

Application Questions: Talk through Micah's 3 imperatives. How does each one impact and change the culture of the American church today? What hinders each?

- As with the temple itself, God is more concerned with what is taking place inside the hearts of our church members than he is with what is taking place with our building or our budget. He has called us together this morning and every Sunday morning to receive our praise and mobilize us to go back out and declare with joy God's goodness, just like at the parade into Jerusalem on the day of Jesus' triumphant entry.

⁸ Both Paul David Tripp and Rick Warren have both said something similar in their writings, as has C. S. Lewis.