

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 24, 2019. "Encounters: Turning the Tables on Contempt".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap Series.

We're in our third week of our "**Encounter**" series. A look at people who had a significant, life-changing "**Encounter**" with the person of Jesus, and how that "**Encounter**" impacted and changed the direction of their lives. We all know the influence of certain people who come into our lives, pour wisdom and life truths into us, and our life isn't, cannot be, the same after we have those experiences. And we're using the life of Jesus, and the people who "**Encountered**" him, to draw out those powerful truths, and examining how we can apply them to our everyday life also.

C Sunday.

Sunday we had the return of one of our long time favorite preachers in Kristen Hill. She dove into the story of the clearing of the temple, and the response of the children and people who had been driven to the margins of society. This was a powerful statement and act by Jesus declaring not only what the temple was created for, 'a house of prayer', but also the all inclusive message that God has come for all nations and all people, and not just those like us.

In this day and age, we have to constantly be vigilant in not letting our beliefs, language, even our attitude be one that creates barriers, builds walls, between us and others. And religion is historically notorious for wanting to define the "*who's in and who's out*" line, and when that happens we always find Jesus on the other side of whatever line we draw.

So...let's start with generic overview type questions.

How have you seen the church, or maybe even experienced it yourself, create barriers or build walls between itself and certain groups of people?

What religious language have they used to do this?

D. Scripture.

The passage used Sunday was **Matthew 21:12-17**. Read this passage, and then we'll ask the usual questions about your interaction with it.

What jumped out to you, spoke to you about this passage?

What does it say about the nature of gathering places to meet God?

What does it say about the religious leaders tendency to exclude others?

Kristen landed on one particular idea, and that was our tendency to hold certain types of people or just 'the other' as they're often labeled, in contempt.

So... just to establish some understanding.

What does 'contempt' mean to you? How do you define it?

What happens that allows, causes, others to hold certain types of people in contempt?

What is possibly at the root of having contempt for others?

Kristen gave us the definition of contempt. Its; *"the feeling that a person or thing is beneath consideration or worthless or deserving scorn"*.

Wrestle with this definition in how you may view others.

There were several points made that challenged us to do some serious inner work to see if we are harboring contempt for others.

1. Have we allowed a screening or filtering system to grow within us that allows us to see others as less than us?

Do we continually make room in our hearts for 'the other'?

2. Who is traditionally excluded from our religious gatherings because of our beliefs?

Can we overturn the tables in our heart, and open up spaces for everyone?

3. Children are extravagantly gracious in not seeing color, sexuality, race, nationality. They just see people, and love without conditions. This is why they were able to sing about what Jesus was doing.

So...what would it take to both; have the heart of a child in the work of Jesus, and to train our children to be equally open and inclusive of all types of people....no matter what?

This requires a lot of inner work, and may challenge some of our held beliefs or values about what it means to be a child of God. We may put some conditions on what being a child of God means, and we have to engage this passage, and ask if we've done the same thing that these money changers did in the temple by creating a structure of; *'who's in, who's ok, and who's out...who's not ok'*.

And...are we willing to realize, and admit, that many of our beliefs around inclusiveness may be more political or cultural than they are the teachings of Jesus. Even if we recoil a bit thinking about this, are we willing to at least wrestle seriously with the question.

In how we see, engage, and love others, are we more like the practice found in the temple, or are we more like Jesus?

That friends...is such a tough and hopefully challenging question.

E. Challenge.

We, in the church, have to be the people out front welcoming everyone, all the time...just like Jesus did. And be the ones that "overturn the tables of contempt".