

The Week Before the Cross – Week 2 – Mark 11:15-18

Mark 11:15-18: *On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves,¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, “**Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”***

¹⁸ *The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.*

INTRO to Series “The Week Before the Cross”: When Jesus returned to Jerusalem the week before the Passover, He knew the road He was taking would soon lead Him to the cross. That final week before Jesus went to Calvary contained some of the Lord’s most important teaching, miracles, and moments. In the season leading up to Easter, we’ll journey day-by-day through Jesus’ last steps before He laid down His life willingly for the sins of the world.

INTRO to **Mark 11:** Last week, we began Jesus’ journey to the cross with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which happened on the Sunday before Good Friday. This week we move into Monday, when Jesus cursed a fig tree close to Jerusalem (**Mark 11:12-14**) and then moved into the temple courts.

I. MONDAY: Jesus enters the temple courts and drives out the merchants and money changers... (vs. 15-16)

-The outer court of Herod’s temple in Jerusalem, often called the “Court of the Gentiles,” was often filled with merchants selling items for sacrifice and money changers providing the appropriate coins to be used for offerings. It is possible that other items related to cult religions were also being sold in this space. This process was overseen by the Sadducees and the Sanhedrin.

QUOTE: “The Court of the Gentiles was a virtual stock market of animal dealers and money changers, all of whom were necessary to ensure proper sacrifices and offerings for the many pilgrims, especially at festivals, to the temple.” –James R. Edwards

-The purpose for exchanging coins was that it was against temple regulations for coins to be used in offerings that depicted a human image, like all Roman coins (Caesar).

-With righteous anger, Jesus cleared out the merchants and money changers in the temple.

-Jesus’ actions have been called an “acted out parable” – much like Isaiah walked naked and barefoot through Jerusalem for 3 years (**Isaiah 20**), and Jeremiah had broken a clay jug as a sign of God’s judgment (**Jeremiah 19**).

-In other words, His actions and words had a deeper meaning than simply what was happening in that moment, just like the cursing of the fig tree.

-In this case, Jesus was confronting the leadership of Israel and the people of God who were putting profit above purity in worship. Much like the fig tree, their outer appearance looked good but they produced no fruit because their hearts were far from God.

II. Jesus proclaims the Word of the Lord regarding His Father's House... (vs. 17)

-The Lord's house was supposed to be a place of worship, prayer, and witness to the Gentiles (see **Isaiah 56:6-7** below), but instead it had become like a "den of robbers" (see **Jeremiah 7:1-11** below).

-As Jesus says here, the temple did not *belong* to Israel, it belonged to the Lord! The temple was not "the people's house," it was the Lord's house. God had called His people to worship in His house as a witness to all the nations, not to take advantage of them for personal gain.

-Today, the Body of Christ, the Church, is the House of the Lord. And each of us, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for God's glory (**1 Peter 2:5**).

-At the same time, our bodies are also called "temples," for in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God lives in us! (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**)

III. Jesus experiences mixed reactions—amazement along with increased opposition... (vs. 18)

-Matthew's Gospel adds to this story: *The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.* (**Matthew 21:14**)

-Throughout Jesus' ministry, the chief priests and teachers of the Law were steadily realizing that the control they were confident they had was slipping away.

-Jesus was not the kind of Messiah the religious leaders wanted the Messiah to be!

-On this day in the temple, they once again questioned Christ's authority (see **Mark 11:27-33** below) while also increasing their efforts to have Him put to death.

-On the other sides, the crowds reacted with amazement at what Jesus said and did. Remember, however, the crowds will also turn on Jesus just a few days later.

Other Scriptures Referenced:

Isaiah 56:6-7: *And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”*

Jeremiah 7:1-11: *This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² “Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: “Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. ³ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!” ⁵ If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, ⁶ if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, ⁷ then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁸ But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. ⁹ “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.*

Mark 11:27-33: *They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?” ²⁹ Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!” ³¹ They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ³² But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) ³³ So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”*