

## INTRODUCTION

Last week I suggested some hymn titles for the chronologically challenged. This week someone emailed me a funny list of pop song titles for aging Baby Boomers. I realize anyone under the age of 40 probably won't recognize any of these songs, so ask a Boomer who may be near you. Now for the first time, hear these songs famous from the 1960s and 1970s: First there's Herman's Hermits singing, "Mrs. Brown, You've got a lovely walker." Next, hear the aging Beatles Paul and Ringo singing, "I get by with a little help from depends." Don't miss the Bee Gees singing, "How can you mend a broken hip?" And you've got to hear Paul Simon singing, "50 Ways to Lose your Liver." And who can forget Helen Reddy singing, "I am Woman, hear me snore." And the Scandinavian group Abba will have us rocking out to their new song, "Denture Queen." And finally, Jerry Lee Lewis, who is 80 years old, has a new song entitled, "A whole lot of Aching going on!"

We've been studying the Gospel According to Mark for over a year and this is the 42nd message in the series. Mark only has sixteen chapters, and the last six chapters deal with the last week of the earthly life of Jesus. That means that almost 40% of the book is devoted to the events that lead to the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

In the last message we talked about the Passover Party Parade as Jesus entered Jerusalem to the cries of the people shouting, "Hosanna!"

Mark 11:11-19. "Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it."\*

"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area 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, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 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.'" 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. When evening came, they went out of the city."

*\*To be continued NEXT week*

There are many paintings depicting this scene. One is by the Italian master Luca Giordano who portrayed Christ cleaning out the market areas. You can see a couple of Jewish leaders on the right side, the religious mafia, discussing how they need to kill Jesus.

Some people look at this scene and ask, "Did Jesus lose His temper and get angry? Isn't it a sin to be angry?" This wasn't a spur-of-the-moment action. The evening before Jesus had witnessed the scene in the Temple courts, and He came back the next morning to do something about it.

Jesus didn't blow His stack. He was filled with a settled righteous indignation at the way these people were cheating those who came to worship. He decided God's House needed a good cleaning. That's what we're going to talk about today. Keeping God's House Clean. And of course, I'm not talking about this building. Let's learn three things the Bible teaches about God's House.

## **I. BEFORE THE CROSS GOD HAD A TEMPLE FOR HIS PEOPLE**

God directed Moses to build a tabernacle in the wilderness He could meet the people in the process of worship. The tabernacle was a movable tent that wasn't very large, about the size of a doublewide mobile home.

About three hundred years later David wanted to build a permanent Temple in Jerusalem to replace the portable tabernacle. David wasn't allowed to build the Temple because he was a man of War. So he helped raise the funds so that his son, Solomon, could build a house for God. It was a magnificent building that took twenty years to build. It contained so much silver and gold that in today's dollars, it would be worth approximately \$200 trillion, roughly ten times more than our national debt.

On the day the Temple was dedicated, Solomon prayed, "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!...May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day...Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive." (1 Kings 8:27, 29, 30)

God didn't really need a building, because you can't restrict God to any dwelling. But He chose to allow His Shekinah glory to fill the Holy of Holies of Solomon's Temple. But the Jews were rebellious and forgot God. So the first Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. When the Jews returned from captivity about seventy years later, a second temple was built. But this was a plain, basic building; not nearly as opulent as Solomon's Temple. Then about 40 years before Jesus showed up in Bethlehem, Herod the Great renovated the Second Temple until it was a grand facility again. This is the temple that was in Jerusalem when Jesus walked through and started cleaning house. That Temple was completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Will there be a Third Temple? Read my next novel.

## **II. NOW GOD HAS A PEOPLE FOR HIS TEMPLE**

After Jesus died on the cross there was no need for a temple. The moment He died, the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom, signifying humanity no longer had to go through a ritualistic sacrifice to approach God. A new way to God was opened on the cross. God still has a temple, but it is no longer a building. He has a people for His temple. God's current House can be understood in two different ways.

### **A. God dwells in the midst of His church**

When Paul wrote to the congregation at Corinth he asked, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) When we gather together in the name of Jesus, He is here in our midst. This congregation, not this building is God's temple. But in addition to this collective expression of God's temple, there is also an individual application.

## **B. God makes His home in those who love and obey Him**

Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23) It is true Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Thirty years ago, Robert Munger wrote a little booklet entitled "My Heart—Christ's Home." It's a wonderful little book that has sold over 10 million copies.

When you place your faith in Jesus, He inhabits your body, soul, and spirit. He owns us. Sometimes you might hear a Christian say, "It's my life, my body, I can do with it as I please." That's not so. The Bible says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

So, since collectively, we are God's Temple, and individually we are God's temple, HOW can we keep God's House clean? That leads to the final truth.

## **III. GOD WANTS HIS TEMPLE TO BE PURE AND HOLY**

The Bible says, "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1) Jesus walked into the temple that day and what He saw wasn't holy and pure. He had the right to clean out God's House because it was His Father's House, so He took charge and did something about it. Have you allowed Jesus to take charge in your life? Let me share three things that happen when Jesus takes control of His Temple (your life) and starts cleaning house.

### **A. When Jesus is in charge, He drives out dishonesty**

The Bible says, "Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there." (Mark 11:15) Was Jesus upset because people were changing money and selling animals in the Temple Courts? No. He was upset because they were crooks. He called them a den of robbers.

There was a sweet lady who was a member of the church I served in Alabama. She came to me very upset once. She said, "Pastor, every time someone sets up a table in our foyer to sell tapes or books, I just want to take a whip and walk through there and turn over the tables and the run the people out, just like Jesus did." That would have been quite a scene, because she was about five feet tall and probably didn't weigh more than 90 pounds soaking wet. But she was sincerely upset, and what I share with her relieved her mind.

I took my Bible and we walked through this passage and showed her that Jesus wasn't upset because they were buying and selling in the Temple courts. He was upset because they were cheating the people. Jesus didn't say "My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of commerce." He said, "You have made it a den of thieves."

I explained there was a certain amount of commerce that had to take place on the temple mount. Pilgrims from other countries had to change their coins into a Jewish shekel, because it would have been blasphemy to offer a coin with a graven image stamped on it. But the moneychangers charged exorbitant prices to exchange the money. Pilgrims had to have animals for the sacrifice, but the crooked merchants were in cahoots with the corrupt priests. If a pilgrim brought a lamb from his home, a priest had to approve it before it could be offered as a sacrifice. The priest would disallow a lamb and direct the pilgrim to his buddy running a business selling approved lambs. The pilgrim would trade in the lamb, pay more money, and then the lamb dealer would turn around and sell the lamb that the priest had earlier declared unacceptable. Cha-ching. Cha-ching. They had a racket going. They were a bunch of thieves. Jesus took a whip to drive out the dishonesty.

Let me compare it to selling used cars. Years ago, in Alabama, a bunch of used car dealers on Sand Mountain were arrested and charged with fraud for selling cars that had false odometer readings. This was when the numbers rolled over. They would buy a worn out car, open the dash, disconnect the odometer cable and attach it to an electric drill set on reverse. Wheeee! In a matter of seconds a clunker with 180,000 miles suddenly had only 30,000 miles. Paint it, put new retreads on it and you had a pristine used car. But it was a crime. It still is.

By the way, now that our cars have digital odometers, they are actually a lot easier to hack using dedicated software. But it's still dishonest. That's what was happening in the temple. These crooked merchants were cheating the people, and it made Jesus angry.

When you allow Jesus to rule in your life, He will drive out dishonesty and replace it with truth. For Christians, honesty isn't the best policy; it's the only policy. Is your life characterized by honesty, transparency, and integrity? Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to speak the truth in love.

Now some people want to use truth like a hammer to hurt people. Then they say, "The truth hurts doesn't it?"

Write down these three words: brutality; hypocrisy; and maturity. When you speak the truth and there's no love, that's brutality. Hypocrisy is when you say you love someone, but you don't speak the truth to him or her. But when you allow the Spirit of Jesus living in you to always speak the truth in love, that's maturity.

## **B. When Jesus is in charge, He promotes prayer**

Jesus 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.'" (Mark 11:17) Jesus wants every church to be a house of prayer, not the building, the people. In the temple worship, there was music, sacrifices, teaching, offering, and fellowship. But God never said His house would be a house of singing, or a house

of offering, or a house of teaching. He said it was to be a house of prayer for all people. Not just the Jews, but for ALL people. Green Acres has a reputation as a great missions church, and a great worshipping church, and a great Bible teaching church. But I long for the day when we are known as a great PRAYING church. We have a wonderful Upper Room Prayer Center on the third floor of the Crosswalk Conference center, but God isn't impressed with a fancy prayer center, He is more interested in whether or not we are a praying church.

And as an individual temple, Jesus wants to make you a house of prayer. I believe the best barometer to gauge your spiritual health is your prayer life. When people talk about you do they ever say, "He is a real prayer warrior!" or "She is a real prayer warrior!" Is your life like a House of Prayer? I've found that Satan will try to tempt you with busy-ness and other good things; anything to keep you from praying.

When the missionaries first penetrated Africa with the Gospel, thousands of Africans turned to Christ. They didn't have the fancy buildings, and resources we have, so they focused on prayer. In one particular village, each Christian would follow a certain path into the brush to spend hours in prayer. The paths became easily marked by daily use. And if any Christian started neglecting prayer, it was soon apparent to others. They would gently remind them by saying, "Brother, the grass grows thick on your prayer path." What about you? Does the grass grow thick on your prayer path to God?

### **C. When Jesus is in charge, He continues to cleanse us**

The Bible says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9) I love that verse because it doesn't say WE are faithful; it says HE is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us. When you trust Jesus, He comes to live in you in the person of the Holy Spirit. You don't have to try to ACT holy; you ARE holy because Jesus lives in you.

The most liberating truth I've ever been taught in my 53 years of following the Lord is that fact that Christ is living in me (and you). This truth is our hope of glory. I learned years ago that it's impossible for me to live the Christian life. The highway to holiness is to simply surrender to Jesus and allow Him to live His life in me.

Major Ian Thomas wrote: "There's only one person that has ever been capable of living the Christian life since Adam fell...Jesus Christ. So the Christian life is the life that Jesus Christ lived then, lived now, by Him, in us. There is no other. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross not just to get you out of hell into heaven. He died on the cross to get God out heaven into you." (*The Indwelling Life of Christ*)

### **CONCLUSION**

The lesson we learn from this passage is that God won't live in a dirty house. You may live in one, but God won't. He is holy and He can't abide with the presence of sin.

A couple of college guys lived in a dirty dorm room. They were the keepers of the school's mascot, a goat. They asked the dean if they could move the goat into their dorm room during cold weather. The dean said, "Well, what about the smell?" The college guys said, "Oh, he'll just get used to it." College guys might live in a dirty room, but God won't.

God has been moving in and out of houses throughout history. We saw where God lived in the tabernacle and then the two temples. But the temple in Jerusalem was desecrated by sin and God had already moved out when Jesus arrived. The Jews were worshipping there during the life of Jesus and even for 40 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, but God wasn't there. It was only empty religion. Jesus pointed at the temple and said to the Jews, "Look, your house [not "My Father's House"] is left to you desolate." (Matthew 23:38) Why did God move out? Because God won't live in a dirty house.

God had another temple I didn't mention. This Temple was Jesus. When Jesus walked on this planet the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. He even said, "Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it back." But when Jesus became sin for us on the cross, God had to move out of that house for three hours. That's why Jesus cried out, "My God, my God WHY have you forsaken me?" Why did Jesus lose the presence of His Father, which had been His from the beginning of the beginning? Because God won't live in a dirty house.

Now let's talk about God's current address. If you're a Christian, you are His temple. So what comes to your mind when I say, "God won't live in a dirty house?" Are you thinking, "Uh oh. There's sin in my life, so does Jesus move out?" Before I understood the power of grace I might have preached something like, "So you'd better make sure you clean up your act if you don't want God to forsake you!" But if Jesus lives in you, grace means you're not a dirty house. You are a child of God. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Oh, you and might occasionally have a dirty thought or say a dirty word, but you're not a dirty house. Being clean is a state of grace, not based on your behavior. God has declared you holy and righteous based on your faith in Jesus.

God is no longer moving in and out of houses. He has come to take up permanent residence in believers. Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes, "He will be in you...and he will be with you forever." (John 14:16) When David sinned he had to beg God, "Please don't take Your Holy Spirit from me!" You don't ever have to pray that. He will never leave you or forsake you. He promised that. So you may be thinking, "Are you saying to me that when I came to Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live in me, and even when I sin, God doesn't forsake me?" That's right. If you're thinking, "That sounds too good to be true," you're exactly right. Grace always sounds too good to be true.

But if this truth makes you think about how you can go out and sin all you want to, then, my friend, you have some kind of spirit in you, but it isn't the Holy Spirit. If you're thinking about how much sin you can get away with and still make it to heaven, I doubt you know Jesus.

You may think Jesus is like an honored guest who is about to arrive so you have to grab the spiritual broom and start sweeping like crazy. No, Jesus dwells in you, and He can handle the broom far better than you can. If you ask Him, He will keep you clean.

So where does God live today? He lives in His church and He lives in me and in you. And as we continually yield control of our lives to Him, He will drive out dishonesty, makes us a house of prayer, and keep on cleansing our hearts.

## OUTLINE

### I. BEFORE THE CROSS GOD HAD A TEMPLE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Solomon prayed, "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!...May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day...Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive." *1 Kings 8:27, 29, 30*

### II. NOW GOD HAS A PEOPLE FOR HIS TEMPLE

#### A. God dwells in the midst of His church

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" *1 Corinthians 3:16*

#### B. God makes His home in those who love and obey Him

Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." *John 14:23*

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
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