

Passion Week: Monday – The King Cleans House
Luke 19:45-48

Introduction: We only have five weeks before Easter, and if you have not realized that fact until now, Daylight Savings was your rude awakening. People differ on how to prepare for Easter: some want to give up something, but remember, if you think it makes you righteous to do so, you've missed the whole point of the gospel, and if you post what you are giving up, you violate **Matthew 6:16-18**, so be careful. Others do not think about it at all until their wife brings home a new shirt for Easter morning, or brings out the tie from the dusty corner of the closet. For us, we are going to prepare for Easter by continuing to walk through Luke along the **days of the Passion Week**. We call it the "Passion Week" (as far as I can tell) because of a phrase in the King James Bible as it recorded Acts 1:3 - "*To whom He also shewed Himself alive after His **Passion** by many infallible proofs*". A better translation of the word would be "*suffering*", which is appropriate since this week culminated in **death**, death on a cross. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despised the shame, and was then seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 12:2).

This is one of the reasons why our **5 minutes of why**, but not the only reason. Our family just returned from Ohio where we participated in the memorial service and burial of a 6 week old girl, our niece, who was the second child lost by Erin's sister and brother in law. It has caused us to examine our own minds and hearts as we search out Scripture for the lingering question of "**why?**" In part, and maybe in the whole, the answer is found in this last week of Jesus' life. It was a week of deliberate, prayerful, and proactive movement on the part of Jesus to endure the suffering that would bring about our restoration. It was moving through all of the physical suffering at the hands of those He placed Himself in, to the shouts of "Crucify Him" from those who hailed Him as King, and laying His life down as a Good Shepherd (See John 10). He did this to endure the ultimate, taking the wrath of God on Himself, becoming our Passover Lamb, and being the one who knew no sin to be sin so that **IN HIM we might become the righteousness of God** (2 Cor. 5:21). That is what we remember during this last week of Jesus life, and that is what we focus on as we approach Easter Sunday.

So I take you back a few weeks as we followed Luke's narrative with Jesus entering Jerusalem on Sunday, with the city erupting in praise. Picturing the city at this time requires us to remember days of Woodstock and Coachella (I'm just testing to see who actually went to these), where a city is overrun by those descending on it for a week long event. **Passover** was a pilgrim feast, meaning there were thousands of families there from out of town, mostly from Galilee. Families would have found housing with relatives, in a few converted rentable houses, but also in tents in and around the city. It was transformed from a quiet city to an over capacity, jammed, bustling town of individuals seeking to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, near the Temple, and close to God.

On Sunday after entering the city, the text says that Jesus wept over the city, looked around, and went back up the mount of Olives and stayed in Bethany, His normal nightly retreat during the week. On Monday Jesus came back into the city early in the morning where Luke tells us "**Jesus entered the Temple**". This was not only "not weird", but was altogether proper. The crowd might have been expecting Him to enter into the Temple and drive out the Roman soldiers in the Fort Antonia which overlooked the Temple, or assault the house of Pilate, the Roman overseer at the time. They were ready for action, and the Temple was the place to do it. But what they got was once again unexpected: **Jesus did not come to solve Roman oppression, but rather Jewish religious corruption.** It was in the Temple that Jesus acted more Messianic than ever before, both clarifying the gospel and inciting His opposition. It was in the Temple that we learned that we do not need to Temple.

God's Purpose for the Temple

Backing up a bit, we must first acquaint ourselves not only with the Temple, but the purpose it played in the life of Israel and the rest of the world.

Accommodation to Man

The first Temple was planned out by David and built by his son Solomon. David had sinned by giving into Satanic temptation (1 Chron. 21:1) and took a census, counting the people. As a result, he bought a threshing floor from Ornan (aka Araunah) the Jebusite to build an altar and burnt offering (2 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 21). This location was also known as Mount Moriah, the location of the near sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22). A threshing floor would have been a flat surface up on a ridge or mountain in order to catch the breeze, separating wheat from chaff. This means that the original location was not large but adequate to produce the ornate structure under Solomon's care.

The Temple was an accommodation to the limitations and needs of the people. When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he declared that heaven and earth cannot contain God, let alone a structure made by man. But it allowed Israel access to God, a place of worship, where the world around would have known that God was in the land. This Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C after the final rebellion of Zedekiah. The city and temple were burned to the ground and all the elements of value were carried off as well. This ground laid fallow until Cyrus defeated Babylon in 539 B.C and commissioned the people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5). The construction was done under the care of **Zerubbabel** (Ezra 3:8), and when the foundation was finally laid there was a loud shout of both joy and weeping, one for the ability to rebuild, the other because it paled in comparison to its former glory.

The temple Jesus would have visited during His time on the earth was *this* temple, but it was rebuilt into a wonder of the world. Herod the Great began an audacious remodel in 20-19 B.C and radically extended the temple mount to accommodate the large crowds of Jesus day, using feats of engineering that even modern architects have difficulty explaining *how* he did it. John 2:20 says that it was a work in progress, 46 years into it and counting when Jesus first cleansed the temple. The whole project was finished only **6 years** before it was razed by the Romans, no stone left on top of another. It was gleaming, which white marble and overlaid in gold, but was full of dead mans bones inside.

Centralized Worship

After being enslaved for hundreds of years, wandering in the wilderness, and conquering the Promised Land, the Temple in Jerusalem gave the people a permanent, fixed, and unifying place to worship. This was also where God would commune with the people, His prescience indwelling the holy of holies, received worship and sacrifice, and welcomed all who desired to worship Him. It was a symbol to the outside world that Israel affirmed the Covenant between them and God and that YHWH was the one and only God among nations of numerous idols and false gods. In the Temple:

- **It was a house of prayer** (Isaiah 56:7) - Prayer is the essence of worship, where communion with God can take place
- **Communion and meditation** (Psalm 65:4; 27:4) - A desire to worship by rightly thinking about His nature, holiness, and Person, bowing to Him
- **Penitence, Confession, and Praise through the means of sacrifice** (1 Kings 8:33-36) - When the people sinned, they could confess it and satisfy God's wrath through offering sacrifices that would take their place. It was a place of repentance and forgiveness

- **A place where foreigners (*non-Jews*) could come and worship** (1 Kings 8:41-43) - Far from being exclusive, those outside of the House of Israel could come to the Temple and pray to God, worshipping His name.

Israel's Perversion of the Temple

But the Temple had no longer remained in its pure state. God's presence was no longer filling the Temple, Israel was no longer independent, and though the people had access to it, the activity that went on was highly influenced by the secular culture of the Romans who ultimately controlled what went on. This influence was seen clearly by the Jewish groups who made up the power players in Jesus' day: the **Pharisees & Sadducees**.

Role of the Sadducees

These two groups made up the "Sanhedrin", the highest Jewish authority in Jesus' day. This group had to work with Rome to get anything done, including putting someone to death. It was this group that Jesus tangled with and ultimately had to get to agree to move forward with crucifying Him. here is a quick synopsis of the two groups:

Pharisees -

- **Smaller in number but great in influence -**
- **Common man loved them**
- **Religious separatists**
- **High view of the Law and Oral Tradition**
- **Controlled the synagogues**

Sadducees -

- **Aristocrats**
- **Common man reviled them**
- **Religious pragmatists** - actually were not "religious" at all and wanted to work closely with Rome
- **Low view of Law** (except the Pentateuch) **and disregarded the Oral Law**
- **Did not believe in the resurrection**
- **Controlled the Temple**

Denigration of Worship

The reason the people hated the Sadducees is the obscene level of corruption in the Temple. Thousands would flock to pilgrim celebrations and feasts every year, and since there was one controlling body, they took advantage of that monopoly and the helplessness of the people to do anything else. Josephus describes the corruption as the Bazaar of Annas, the greedy high priest who Jesus appeared to first after His arrest (John 18:13-23). When the Bible talks about the "chief priests", these were men who sat on the Sanhedrin as current or former high priests. Annas' son-in-law was Caiaphas, who was currently at the head of the table in the Sanhedrin. Annas still had influence and authority.

Two main areas of corruption:

1) Money Changers - The OT required a 1/2 shekel Temple tax that required visitors to Jerusalem to exchange their local coinage for Jewish or Tyrian coins. If you've ever had to exchange money overseas, you understand that there is rarely equity in it and one often loses in the transaction, especially if you do it at the airport. Because the people from Galilee and other places HAD to get the

right currency, and because they could ONLY go to the ones on the Temple mount, the wicked workers would charge as high as 12.5% for the service, an exorbitant fee by any measure.

2) Priestly accepted lambs - Every Jewish family was required to have a spotless, pure, and acceptable Passover lamb to celebrate the feast, one lamb for every 10 people. Reports from Josephus were as many as 215,000 lambs would have been killed, meaning the Temple became a slaughter house. Once in Jerusalem, a family would either have to purchase a lamb or have the one they brought inspected by the priests. If the lamb they brought from home failed inspection, they HAD to buy one provided, at outrageous prices. The corruption was such that a perfectly acceptable lamb would be rejected, would go back into the pen, and sold to someone else at a profit. The Sadducees were mob-like in their efficiency of profiting off the control they possessed. The people hated it, but could do nothing about it.

Jesus' Possession of the Temple

Luke 19:45 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". 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.

Mark 11:15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.¹⁶ **And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.**

First Cleansing – *folk hero*

What Jesus found in the Temple, in the place that was designed to worship His Father, abhorred Him. In the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus entered during the Passover feast to observe the selling of sheep and pigeons (for those who could not afford sheep) and the money changers. Infuriated, He took a whip of cords and **drove them out of the temple**, along with the sheep and oxen (John 2:15), turning over the money changers tables. This would have infuriated the Sadducees, but it would have absolutely delighted two groups: the **people and the Pharisees**. Its no wonder that at the beginning of His public ministry He did not wrangle as much with the Pharisees as a whole, but instead got ramped up toward the end. This cleansing also made Jesus a **folk hero** among the people, someone who had the gall and audacity to stand up to corruption.

Second Cleansing – *death warrant*

There were two other Passovers that Jesus entered Jerusalem that evidently He plugged His nose and did not react. But on this last Passover His cleansing had special significance. Not only did He call out the immoral and wicked practices of the "priests" who were supposed to watch over the souls of the people, calling them **robbers** operating out of a den, but He did something even more practical. Jesus needed to get unity among the Sadducees and Pharisees to agree to put Him to death, so He had to get both parties to simultaneously hate Him enough to do something against their own protocol. Cleansing the Temple at this point did the trick for the **Sadducees**. This event would have been the last straw in a bucket full of grievences, but solidified their resolve against Him, moving them to seek opportunity to kill him. The Pharisees would get on board on Tuesday, but we'll discuss that next week.

Our Participation in a better Temple

Jesus taught these couple of days in the temple, and though they were looking for ways to accuse and arrest Him, they couldn't find any grounds to do so. Jesus was teaching the people, and **preaching the gospel** (Luke 20:1). In other words, Jesus was not just negatively tearing down false worship, He was teaching what worship was all about. The temple was packed with well meaning worshippers, but they missed the point. God is not contained by a building or structure, but is to be worshipped in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24), and God is seeking those who will worship Him this way. Today we do not have a Temple to travel to (though there will be one in the Millennial Kingdom - see Ezekiel 40-48). By the time we get to Revelation 21 and the New Jerusalem, we are shown a sight where there is NO TEMPLE (Rev. 21:22) because its **temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb!** This is tremendous news for us. It means we have something *better than the Temple to worship in. We have Christ!*

Future of the Temple

The Temple is no longer a destination or place, but is the Body of Christ (John 2:21), God dwells in us through His Spirit, calling us His Temple (1 Cor. 3:16), and the Household of God grows into the holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:19-22). This means that everything the temple offered the people of Israel is now for everyone in Christ:

- Temple was a place of God's **presence**, but in Christ the fullness of deity dwells (Col. 2:9). When we know Jesus, we know God. This is because in Christ we have **access** to God, since no one comes to the Father but through Christ (John 14:6)
- We no longer have to make atoning sacrifices in the temple because Christ became the once for all sacrifice for us (1 Peter 2:24), since by His wounds, we are healed.
- We have a **mediator** in Christ, and no longer have to go to a priest who enters into the holy place. "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 6:19-20)
- He is our **firm foundation** on which we **stand** - "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

Jesus is here, He is all, He is everything. He is the object and means of worship, He is the point. We have Jesus, so we can worship in spirit and truth. Since we do not have a temple or need one now, how does this affect our worship today, particularly in a church?

Principles for Worship

- **Worship is not focused on a place but on a person, because it is not an event but a focus of life** -
- **Worship is not about consumerism (what I get), but is focused on the glory of God and making much of Him.**
- **Worship is not about me, but a focus on the gospel** - that I am free to **confess, repent, and find forgiveness for sin.** We can respond in prayer, praise, and displaying God to the nations. We do not have to offer sacrifices anymore because Jesus was the final sacrifice.

- **Worship is not about my performance but on the work of Jesus on my behalf**
- **Worship is not about numbers** (how many people are there) **but on each response to God in faith.**

Jesus cleansed the temple, but did something greater. He gave us access to the Father, forgave our sin, sacrificed on our behalf, and secured our salvation, freeing us up to worship.