

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#24: Mark 11:12-33: Cleansing of the Temple

Intro: The Uncomfortable Jesus

I. Reason for Cleansing the Temple

A. Worship had been corrupted and turned into big business (v.13-14)

- Pilgrims in town for the festival needed to purchase animals for sacrifice; and they would need to exchange foreign currency for local currency to do so
- It is likely that animals cost a premium price; and charged hefty currency fees
- So, when Jesus enters the Temple, there is not a sound of worship but the clinking of coins! Worship had been changed into a shopping mall

B. So, Jesus drives out the money changers with a whip (v.15-17)

- #1 Christ is disturbed by the way his people are oppressed for the sake of money
 - The religious people are making money off the poor and needy!
 - He cites Isaiah 56:7: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." Why mention the *nations*?
 - He cites Jer 7:11: "You have made it [the temple] a den of robbers"
- #2 Christ is disturbed by the fact that God's glory is diminished
 - He has zeal for his father's glory: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (citing Psalm 69:9)
- Key application question: What disturbs you? What bothers you? The answer reveals a lot about our hearts

II. The Meaning of Cleansing the Temple

A. Cleansing the Temple Shows Jesus is God

- In the opening verses of Mark's Gospel, he cites Mal 3:1 which is about the Lord visiting his people Israel
- Mal 3:1-2 says: "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple...But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiners fire and a fuller's soap."

B. Cleansing the Temple Shows Judgment is Coming

- The act of cleansing the temple is a symbol of God's displeasure and coming judgment
- This is confirmed by the "sandwiching" of the story with the cursed fig tree
 - On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus curses a fruitless fig tree (v.12-14)
 - After the temple cleansing, the tree now has withered and died (v.20-21)
 - In the OT, Israel is often compared to a fig tree (Jer 8:13, 29:17; Hos 9:10, 16)
 - **The message is plain: Israel will be judged for her lack of fruit. We need to remember that God is a holy God and calls us toward holiness!
- Jesus will revisit the future destruction of the Temple in Mark 13

C. Cleansing the Temple Shows Jesus is the Real Temple

- The future destruction of the Temple will send a bold theological message: Jesus is the real Temple
- Remember, the physical Temple in the OT was merely a symbol of the greater reality that was coming—God doesn't really dwell in a building
- The Temple represented two things: God's presence, and the need for blood sacrifice. Jesus fulfills both!
- In John's account of the Temple cleansing: "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up'...But he was speaking about the temple of his body" (2:19, 22).

III. The Response to Cleansing the Temple

A. The Jewish Leaders Plot to Kill Jesus

- V.18: "the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him"
- But they feared the crowds—a key point which will come up later

B. The Jewish Leaders Challenge the Authority of Jesus

- They ask Jesus, "By what authority are you doing these things?" (v.28)
- Jesus answers a question with a question: "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?"
- Jesus is exposing their hypocrisy—they say they care about God when they really just care about their own power and position

C. How Should We Respond to Jesus' Judgment on the Temple?

- Simple: "Have faith in God" (v.22)
- Faith is the key to bearing fruit! Fruit doesn't come from trying harder, but by looking to Jesus in faith—the kind of faith that can move mountains (v.23-25)

Key Point: The Message of Jesus is about Repentance from Sin, and Most People Don't Want to Hear that Message. Cleansing hurts!

Discussion Groups

1. Discuss the kind of things that disturb and bother you. What can we learn about what disturbed and bothered Jesus and be more like him?
2. Why is it important to remember that God is a holy God who expects fruit from those who follow him? How do we absorb that truth without becoming people focused on works righteousness?
3. Have an honest discussion about how you respond when people point out areas in your life that need to change. What can we learn from this passage about bad responses to conviction over sin, and how our responses ought to look?