

## **The King Confronts Corruption**

Scripture: Luke 19:45-48

Code: 42-243

It is a privilege, a great privilege, never to be taken for granted to hear the Word of the Lord, and we will do that together this morning. Open your Bible to Luke 19, and we will look at the last section in this 19th chapter – Luke 19, verses 45 through 48.

As we approach this text, we need only briefly to be reminded that our Lord Jesus Christ has begun the final week of His earthly life. On Friday, He will die. This is Tuesday, the day after His humble coronation, the day after His entry into Jerusalem. You remember it well, I'm sure. If you've been with us the last couple of weeks, it was Monday that He entered into the city to the cries of Hosanna. On that Monday, He presented Himself to Israel as the true King, and the people cried that He was the one coming in the name of the Lord, the Son of David, the heir to the throne, the Messiah, the Anointed One. The procession of that Monday involved tens of thousands of people, some would estimate over two hundred thousand possibly, as He came down the western slope of the Mount of Olives, having ascended to it from the city of Jericho and came to the city of Jerusalem through the eastern gate. It was a celebration the likes of which had never been held in Jerusalem for a long, long time.

When He entered that eastern gate on that Monday to the acclaim, if fickle, nonetheless, loud and continuous of that crowd, He immediately went to the temple which is just inside the eastern gate. In Mark chapter 11 and verse 11, it says that the celebration ended at the temple because it was late, and He then returned to Bethany to spend the night with His friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and His disciples who were there with Him as well. Quite a day, that Monday, riding in on the colt, the foal of a donkey, as people threw their robes and palm branches at His feet and hailed Him as the coming Messiah.

He went directly to the temple and, in the twilight of that Monday, must have surveyed the conditions in the temple which were manifestly visible in the wide outer courtyard called the Court of the Gentiles. And what He saw in that twilight sent the agenda for what He did the next day, but on that Monday night, first of all, He retired to Bethany to rest. Bethany was a place of comfort for Him, a place of love, and He needed the rest after a long, arduous day of dealing with the crowd, after a long day prior to that dealing with people coming to visit Him in Bethany, and, prior to that, a long arduous walk from Jericho to Bethany. His weariness must have given Him great rest.

Lodging, by the way, was a problem. It was Passover time. As many as two million Jews would be in and around Jerusalem. There were inns. They filled up very rapidly, probably mostly with people well known to the innkeeper if not family and relatives.

There were religious groups scattered around the city, Essenes, Zealots, Pharisees, Sadducees, other religious groups who also had people connected with their groups who came into the pilgrimage, and they would accommodate the people who were a part of their groups. There were probably even those who were true believers in Jesus who housed others who came down from Galilee who were also believers in Jesus.

And there were scattered around Jerusalem, foreign synagogues, synagogues that accommodated people who had come from other countries and spoke other languages and yet were proselytes to Judaism, and those foreign synagogues ran hospices for their people who also came for the Passover, visiting Jerusalem on this notable occasion. There were a number of Jews who were wealthy enough to live somewhere else in the land of Israel, but also own a home in Jerusalem, and so they would come to their home and extend the home that they would dwell in to other friends and guests. There were even wealthy, wealthy families who owned great palaces in and around Jerusalem, where they would house a number of people.

But when all that was filled up, that didn't touch the necessity of the masses. So in reality, Jerusalem became a tent city. And everywhere, there were tents put up by people around the perimeter of the city, extending certainly the two miles to Bethany and down the road to the south toward Bethlehem and every other direction. Judaistic law required that anybody who was to engage in the Passover, had to spend the night prior in Jerusalem. That was impossible because the crowds were so large. So for the occasion, they extended the official boundaries of Jerusalem basically to accompany and accommodate the tent cities that surrounded the city itself and the wall.

Some people actually just stayed around the temple, couldn't stay inside the temple, but they just stayed as close as they could. The temple also had adjacent buildings in the perimeter areas of the temple where there were apartments and places that people could stay, and those places were rented out. To put it simply, the place was jammed with people beyond its capacity. The temple was forbidden as a place to stay, so it was very good that Jesus and His disciples had their friends in Bethany and that they had a home large enough to accommodate Him and the Twelve, as well.

So culminating that Monday entry, as twilight comes because it's late, Mark tells us in chapter 11, Jesus left Jerusalem, walked the two miles with His disciples back across up the slope of the Mount of Olives, over the crown, down into Bethany to spend the night there. In His mind, as He walked in the darkness, in His mind, as He went to sleep, must have been what He had seen in the temple. It wasn't unfamiliar to Him. He had seen it many times, but this was His last visit there, and He was going to act on what He saw. He does.

Tuesday morning, He comes back, and we pick up the text in verse 45: “He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were selling, saying to them, ‘It is written, “And My house shall be a house of prayer,” but you have made it a robber's den.’ And He was teaching daily in the temple, but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, and they couldn't find anything that they might do for all the people were hanging upon His words.”

This is an amazing, amazing event, and it does mark, again, the manifestation of Jesus as King. It gives evidence of His kingly credentials. What He does here and the response that it generates all points to Him as God's true King, God's true Messiah, God's own eternal Son. He does something that is shocking. The people who hoped that He would be the Messiah would have expected Him to attack Fort Antonia, where the Roman army was garrisoned, or they might have expected Him to attack the house of Pilate, the pathetic Roman-appointed ruler of Israel.

But He doesn't attack the pagan, idolatrous, occupying Romans. He attacks the temple. He attacks the heart of Judaism. He attacks the soul of the nation. He attacks the most respected, the most elevated, the most trusted of all people in the land, those who ostensibly represented God. He attacks “the” most corrupt of all things in Jerusalem – religion. This is stunning. This is shocking and demonstrates, again, His credentials.

Let me show you a handful of things that show that He is indeed God's King. First of all, He demonstrates that He's on a divine mission. He demonstrates that He's on a divine mission, verse 45, “And He entered the temple...” That's enough said. A lot of places He could have gone. A lot of places. That says all we need to know.

People would have hoped that He headed for Pilate or the Roman army. They would have hoped that He would have brought about freedom from the oppression and occupation of Rome. They would have hoped that He would have divested that country of all the symbols of idolatry that were on Roman paraphernalia, that He would have attacked the taxation system which Rome had imposed upon them.

They wanted this all along, since the very first great demonstration of His power in Galilee at the beginning of His ministry. They tried to make Him a King by force when they knew He had miracle power over disease and when they knew He had miracle power over demons and when they knew that He could create food. They saw in Him the Ultimate Liberator that would free them militarily, politically, socially, economically.

And so they had, all along, a fixation on earthly issues, but Jesus who had been inaugurated informally the day before came with no weapons and no army and made no attack on any earthly institution whatsoever. He attacked the temple. He had no dignitaries with Him, just some common

nobodies. But nonetheless, it becomes clear to us that He is God's King because He is on a divine mission.

Luke says He entered the temple. Matthew says He went into the temple of God. Indeed it is the temple of God, and God was being desecrated and dishonored and blasphemed in that temple. To Jesus, the issue in Israel was not Roman occupation; the issue was Jewish religious corruption. The Lord is not concerned with the people's relationship to Rome. He is concerned with the people's relationship to God. He's not concerned with their politics. He's not concerned with their social issues. There are many things that could have been attacked. There are many iniquities, injustices, deprivations, mistreatments, abuses. He never addressed any of them.

He started His ministry, you remember, in John chapter 2, by cleansing the temple. He went into the temple when He first arrived at the beginning of His ministry in Jerusalem, sat down in a premeditated manner, made a whip, and cleaned out the temple. That's how it started in John 2, verses 13 to 17, and that's how, 3 years later, it ends – with the 2nd assault on the corruption of the temple.

Just to show you how little had changed in those three years, listen to the description of His first attack on the temple, John 2:13: "The Passover of the Jews was at hand. Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves and the moneychangers seated. He made a scourge of cords, drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen, and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. And to those who were selling the doves, He said, 'Take these things away. Stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise.' And His disciples remembered that it was written – " Psalm 69:9 " – Zeal for Your house will consume Me." That's how it started. That's how it ended.

His whole ministry is always focused on the spiritual. It is always focused on that which concerns people's relationship to God. He is concerned about true worship of the true God in the true manner – not about politics, not about earthly matters. He said, in John 4, in conversation with a Samaritan woman, "God seeks true worshipers who worship Him in Spirit and in truth." It is always about worship.

Three years has changed nothing. His focus is unaltered, back to the temple. He passed over many issues – social issues, economic issues, political issues, issues of justice and equity. He saw all that was out of harmony. He saw all that was not as it should be, but He also knew that the only way to remedy anything is to have a right relationship with God. His ministry was always about the kingdom and about true worship.

There were things in that nation that only soldiers could make right. There were things in that nation that only righteous leaders could make right. There were things in that nation that only compassionate philanthropists could make right. There were things there that demanded social reform if they were to

be altered, but none of that matters. That is just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic – because what matters is a person's relationship to God. As Peter put it, “Judgment must begin at the house of God.”

If the Lord were to come into this world today and here and now, He would not go to Washington and assault political powers. He would go to the churches, and He would attack the heretics and the hypocrites and the exploiters and the phonies and the fakes, and He would call for true worship of His Father. As long as things are wrong in the temple, then everything else is chaos. The measure of any society is its relationship to God. Worship is always the issue. Always. Judgment has to begin at the house of God.

I stand with Christ. I can't get caught up in political issues, military issues, social issues. I grieve that there is unrighteousness that prevails in institutions in the world. But in the end, my concern is the purification of the church because the only remedy is the true gospel being preached in a true church. Jesus went to the temple. That was the only place to go for the work of God.

What did He find when He got there? The word “temple” here is the general word, generic word for temple, *hieron*. It simply refers to the whole, huge ground, the general ground on which the temple and all its accommodating facilities sat, on the Mount on the east of Jerusalem, just up the slope from the Kidron Brook. The east wall of the city was really the east wall of the temple – temple ground. This is the general term for the temple and its totality which would mean that He went in the first opening to the vast temple ground – different word than another word translated temple, *naos*.

If you go back to Luke 1, it tells us that Zacharias was a priest, and, verse 9 of Luke 1, “He entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense.” The word temple there is *naos*, and that's all the way inside to the place where the priests, alone, could go to burn incense and make offerings in several different doors and courtyards to the inner part.

You wouldn't know that in the English because both are translated “temple.” This is a word that means the broad total ground of the temple. The sacred place was located right on the plateau, right on the top of the hill. It was a very, very large place, obviously, to accommodate tens of thousands of people who were there. Surrounding the temple were great walls, colonnades, all kinds of buildings, steps ascending to the temple.

Now, there were, within this great area, with its outer wall, several inner courts that got tighter and tighter and tighter until, finally, you got in to the temple on the inside which was made up of the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. First, you entered the Court of the Gentiles, named that because that's as far as Gentiles could go. Anybody could go there. Absolutely anybody could go into the Court of the Gentiles, but if any Gentile went beyond that, death to the Gentile.

Inside the great Court of the Gentiles was another court called The Court of the Women. That's as far as women could go, but any Jew could go there. You entered that by a gate called the Beautiful Gate – popular gate for beggars. Any Jew could enter into what was called The Court of the Women.

Men could then go into the next inner court which is the Court of the Israelites. It was marked by a gate called Nicanor's Gate, made in the Herodian Temple out of Corinthian bronze and so massive it took 20 men to open and close it. Here, people would assemble to worship, and they could look through the doorway into the next courtyard, which is The Court of the Priests. And though they couldn't go in, they could watch while the priests offered incense and sacrificed animals.

In the back of the Court of the Priests was the temple itself. That is the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. So people could look through the doors and see the priests at certain times, offering the morning and the evening sacrifice, burning incense, and, of course, at the Passover, sacrificing all day. The whole large complex is called The Temple of God.

Now, the Court of the Gentiles is where I want you to draw your attention. You walk into the Court of the Gentiles on the east side of the old city of Jerusalem, and you're shocked at what you see. And if you love the Lord and if you believe in the true and pure worship, you're outraged. Jesus was angry at what He saw. He had been angry since He had seen it the night before.

What was going on there? The Court of the Gentiles had been turned into basically a business center. And the business was selling animals for the needed sacrifices. And I told you a couple of weeks ago that one record of one Passover indicates 260,000 lambs were slain, so you can understand how many animals would have been there.

Also, you had to buy accommodating components for offerings and sacrifices, as well, and there were moneychangers there. All of this was basically called the Bazaar of Annas. Annas and Caiaphas both being high priests, they ran this operation, became filthy rich by running it. They sold franchises to people who sold the animals and changed the money and sold the oil and the other things that were used. They sold these franchises for very high, high prices and then they skimmed off a huge percentage of the profit that the shop owner made, so that the Court of the Gentiles was just jammed with these shops.

Lightfoot writes there was always a constant market in the temple in that place. They were called the "shops" where, every day, were sold wine, salt and oil and other requisites to sacrifices. Also, animals were sold, as well.

Now, here's the way the thing would work. You might say, "Well why don't they bring their own animals?" They should do that. They could do that. Choose the best one in the flock without spot and

without blemish. But if you brought your own animal, it was a pretty risky deal because every single animal that was sacrificed had to pass priestly inspection.

And it was to the benefit of the priests to reject your animal because when they rejected your animal, you had to buy their animal. And you would be forced to do that at a very exorbitant price, a huge percentage of that, as I said, skimmed off and paid into the palms of the chief priests.

You brought your animal. They rejected your animal, and some records tell us you pay ten times the fair price. Ten times. This is robbery, this is extortion by the priests. The noise of the place, the filth of the place, the stench of all the animals, the chaos of a stockyard in the temple of God was nauseous to Christ – the corruption, the robbery, the thievery, the kind of people who were operating like this who had no conscience about bilking the poor.

And then there were sellers of doves and pigeons because there were some people so poor they couldn't even afford a lamb, and so the poor people could offer, according to Leviticus 12:6 and 8, they could offer two doves. Doves would be worthy probably in our money today, about a dime each. They would cost about \$10.00 each there. The travesty, the prostitution, the perversion, the corruption was just vile and blatant.

Then there were the moneychangers, *kollubos* is the word that is a part of the word "moneychangers." It means "small coins." Every Jew had to pay a half-shekel temple tax near the Passover time. A month before, you could pay it locally, but if you got to Jerusalem and you hadn't paid it, you had to pay it in the temple, and you had to pay it with a certain coinage required. And if you didn't have the exact amount, then you had to change your money, and they charged you 25 percent to change your money.

It's like traveling overseas and changing your money at the airport, isn't it? You'd be better off to go to the bank before you get to the airport. The charge was exploitive. The whole thing, the whole Bazaar of Annas was vile. It became a hangout for every crook, charlatan, conman of all sorts were there plying their trade. That's where Jesus went.

Religion was corrupt. That's where He gave His attention. All His being was repulsed by what He saw and smelled and heard. Jesus was on His turf. "My house," He says in verse 46. That's the Word of God borrowed from the Old Testament in Isaiah 56. "My house – this is My house. You've brought your corruption into My house."

His house is not the petty political institutions of the world, where there's social institutions. His house is the house where God's name abides. "You have corrupted My world, My house, My glory, the purity of worship." He is the Lord of Sabbath. Matthew 12:6 says He is also the Lord of the temple, and so He's on a divine mission, and that is to assault false worship in the name of the true God. This

is a revelation of who He is. He goes to defend God and God's house against the blasphemers.

Secondly, we see His kingly person demonstrated not only in a divine mission but divine authority. He began to cast out those who were selling. I can't explain this in the way it appears vividly in my mind. How does one person shut that whole operation down?

Here is the first official act of the recognized King. It is a powerful, powerful act. He casts out those who were selling. How many hundreds or thousands of them were there? And are we to suppose that they all lined up and went willingly without a fight, without an argument, without resistance?

He began to cast out those who were selling. He started a process of getting them all out, literally threw them out of the place. The leaders had no zeal for God's glory, God's honor, but He did. Maybe He made another whip. I don't know. It doesn't say anything about what He used to do it, but if you go to Matthew 21 – you don't have to turn to it; I'll just remind you of it. Matthew 21, you have a description of this starting in verse 12. You have another description in Mark 11, starting in verse 15.

And in Matthew, it says, "He overthrew the tables of the moneychangers." He didn't politely come along and say, "Look, guys, you've got to stop this and get out of here." This was physical. He physically threw people out. He physically flipped tables. The moneychangers, literally in the Greek, those who make small change, *kollubos*, He flipped them off their stools and, bodily, threw them out of the place.

I don't know how long this took, but it must have been something to behold, and they must have been terrified at His physical power because they left. He flipped over their tables and scattered their coins all over everyplace.

Matthew also tells us He overturned the seats of those who sold doves. They probably had their doves in little crates and were sitting on little stools, and He picked them up, threw them out, flipped over their stools, sent them rolling and reeling through the temple ground. And Mark adds, in chapter 11, verse 16, He wouldn't allow any man to carry anything through the temple. That is, they left without any of their stuff. How does one person empty the place?

I wish I had been there. I hope, actually, that God recorded it, and there's a DVD in heaven. I want to see this. If not, I want to talk to some of the disciples who were there, get a firsthand and perfectly accurate account. He kicked over the stools, threw over the tables, threw the people out, didn't allow them to take anything. What power, what strength, what authority, and what a stunning thing to do – attack Israel, attack the temple and not Israel's enemies and the pagans?

I'm convinced that if the Lord Jesus were to arrive in this world today, He would attack the church, not Washington, not the universities. He would attack the church with divine authority.



In fact, it would be legitimate to say as a prayer, "Lord, cleanse Your church." With Peter, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." Where are the Martin Luthers to attack the moneychangers and the blasphemers who, in the name of Christ, extort and ply their hypocrisies and their heresies at the expense of people?

We have our false prophets, as there were then, and they're in it for filthy lucre. That's why Peter reminded us in the text I read this morning not to do your ministry for money. Oh, how the Lord hates those who pervert worship, especially those who pervert worship in His name, in the name of God, and do it for money, and do it dishonestly and exploit people, the hypocrites, and the false who promise healings and prosperity. They do this in the name of God, in the name of Christ.

I tell you, I wouldn't want to be in their shoes when the time of cleansing comes, and it will. And so we see who He is by His divine mission and His divine authority.

Thirdly, He demonstrates commitment to divine Scripture. He demonstrates commitment to divine Scripture. Verse 46, saying to them, this is what He was saying repeatedly as He was doing this: "And My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a robber's den," and He quotes two Old Testament scriptures – one out of Isaiah and one out of Jeremiah. This is God's house. This is a place where men come to commune with God. This is a place of prayer. Prayer is the very essence of worship.

What is prayer? It is communing with God, and that's what you do in worship, do you not? That's what you do in worship. You exalt God. You honor God. You speak to God. You sing to God. You glorify God. That's a form of prayer. You confess your sin. You repent. And that's what the temple was designed for.

He quotes, first of all, Isaiah 56:7, "And My house shall be a house of prayer." Isaiah adds, "For all nations," which Mark also includes in his parallel passage.

The Temple was always designed and intended by God to be a place of prayer, a sanctuary of worship, a place of devotion, of meditation, quiet, penitence, brokenness, confession, praise. It was turned into a circus of blasphemy and robbery, a din. Think about one of the great mothers of the Bible, Hannah. Back in 1 Samuel, chapter 1, she went to the temple, and she prayed. She found, in the temple, an environment of quiet meditation and petition. It wouldn't have happened in the temple in Jesus' day.

Perhaps more helpful, go back to 1 Kings, chapter 8. When the first temple was built by Solomon, Solomon prayed a prayer at its dedication, and his prayer tells us what the temple's purpose was. Verse 27, 1 Kings 8: "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven

cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built?" That's not going to contain God. It's not going to hold the infinite God.

"Yet have regard to the prayer of Thy servant, his supplication, O Lord, my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prays before Thee today." I know it's not going to contain You, but I just want to pray that it will fulfill its purpose. What is its purpose? Verse 29, "That Your eyes may be opened toward this house, night and day, toward the place of which Thou hast said My name shall be there to listen to the prayer which Thy servant shall pray toward this place."

It's a place of prayer. That was inaugurated in the very prayer of Solomon. Verse 30: "Listen to the supplication of Thy servant, of Thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place." So you could pray in the temple, around the temple, or just facing toward the temple from any other location. It symbolized the presence of God. "And when they pray toward this place which symbolizes Your presence –" verse 30 "– hear in heaven Your dwelling place; hear and forgive."

So what kind of prayers were they praying? Prayers of what? Confession, penitence, brokenness. Verse 31: "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, then comes and takes an oath before Your altar in this house, then hear in heaven and act and judge Thy servant condemning the wicked by bringing his way upon his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness. When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they've sinned against You, if they turn to You again and confess Your name and pray and make supplication to Thee in this house, then hear thou in heaven and forgive the sin of their people..." and this goes on through the whole chapter.

When they pray in this place or toward this place, hear. Verse 35: "When the heavens are shut up and there's no rain because they've sinned against You and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin, when You dost afflict them, then hear Thou in heaven and forgive the sin of Thy servants and Thy people Israel." Verse 38, "Whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man, or by all Thy people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, spreading his hands toward this house, then hear Thou in heaven."

The whole point of this place, it was a place of prayer. And the sacrifices that were made – in the morning sacrifice, in the evening sacrifice – were simply symbolic of God's hearing prayer because He had been atoned and because He had been propitiated.

It goes on in verse 42, "For they hear of Thy great name, Thy mighty hand and of Thine outstretched arm when He comes and prays toward this house." It goes on and on all the way down to verse 61, "Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord your God, to walk in His statutes, keep His commandments as it is this day. Now the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the Lord." You offer a sacrifice to propitiate God. You offer a sacrifice to satisfy God, and that opens the

way of access and this house becomes a house of prayer.

It is a house of prayer. That's what the temple was. It was where you went to pray. Did you praise? Of course you praised. Did you adore God and worship God? Of course you did that. But primarily, before you did that, you confessed your sin, and you said what the Publican did in Luke 18, pounding his breast, "God, be propitious toward me. Apply the sacrifice that was being offered at that very time."

Psalm 27:4: "One thing I've asked from the Lord, that I shall seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all my days," that's the temple, "and behold the beauty of the Lord and meditate in His temple." It's a place of meditation, it's a place of confession. It's a place of prayer.

Psalm 65:4: "How blessed is the one whom Thou dost choose and bring near to Thee to dwell in Thy courts, to be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, Thy holy Temple," a place of goodness, a place of confession, a place of praise, a place of communion with God. Anything but that was going on in 30 A.D. in the chaos of Herod's temple at the Passover.

"In fact," Jesus says, "you have made it a robbers' den," language borrowed from Jeremiah chapter 7 and verse 11. "You've turned this holy haven of prayer and worship into a robbers' den." Jeremiah 7 even talks about all the abominations. "My name has become a den of robbers," says God in Jeremiah 7.

Thieves liked to hole up in caves. Pretty good guess that highway robbers and so forth would be hiding in the caves. Well, the temple had become their hiding place. It had become a cave for thieves, a refuge for robbers rather than worshipers, a place to protect blasphemers. You didn't need to hide in a cave. You could just go buy a franchise in the temple.

It was so bad – this was a very temporary act on Jesus' part, 40 years later in 70 A.D. – God sent the Roman army and totally destroyed the temple, and it's never been rebuilt in 2,000 years. That's how bad it was. That's where Jesus went because that's His place. And as I said, if He were to come back today, He wouldn't attack the institutions of this world. He would attack the church, the corrupt, unfaithful, untrue church. So we see the King on a divine mission with divine authority, fulfilling the divine Word.

Fourthly, He demonstrated divine compassion. Again, the manifestation of who He is comes through on the other side – divine compassion. Verse 47: "And He was teaching daily in the temple." That is really a startling simple statement. He was teaching daily in the temple. What was He teaching? What would be the things that He would be saying to these people?

Look at chapter 20, verse 1. "It came about on one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel..." Is this compassion? What's He doing? He's preaching the gospel. What's the gospel? The good news of what? Salvation, forgiveness, heaven, eternal life. This is really beauty after the ugliness.

Believe me; the temple courtyard was not tidy. There must have been animals milling all over the place whose owners had been thrown out, money scattered around, birds fluttering, tables overturned, stools rolling around, all kinds of debris strewn in every direction. But the desecration was stopped for a few days, and, for a while, the Son of God dominated the House of God with compassion, teaching daily – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday.

The Savior, one last time, proclaims the gospel of salvation to a recalcitrant people. "Daily" means this was His activity every day left in the week.

The content of His teaching, the gospel, or chapter 20 verse 21, "They said to Him, 'Teacher, we know You speak and teach correctly, and You're not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth or the true way of God.'" You're teaching the gospel. You're teaching the true way of God.

At the end of chapter 21, which brings to a conclusion His teaching ministry – by the way, what He taught is included in chapters 20 and 21, at the end of it, chapter 21, verse 37, "During the day He was teaching in the temple. In evening, He would go out and spend the night on the Mount that is called Olivet and all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

So, day in and day out, He taught, and the people came. They filled the place to hear Him compassionately teach the gospel and the way of God, God's way to live, God's way to heaven. This is the love of God demonstrated: fury, yes; anger, yes; compassion, yes; love, yes.

In high indignation, Jesus drove out those who sold. The guilty left, but some stayed. The temple authorities were furious, as we will see in a moment, but there was also the people there, and He wanted, one last time, to talk with them.

As we go through 20 and 21, we will discover that this is what He taught – the gospel, the way of God. That's the positives. And then He taught some very, very negative things. He talked against the leaders, against the heretics, against the hypocrites. He promised the destruction of Jerusalem, and He promised His own return in judgment. That's compassionate too.

It is compassionate to preach the gospel. It is compassionate to preach the way of God. It is compassionate to warn against false leaders, heretics, and hypocrites. It is compassionate to warn of divine judgment. All of this is compassionate, calling people to salvation in the light of judgment.

But Matthew tells us something else. Matthew says that He wasn't just teaching, Matthew says beautifully that the blind and the lame were coming to Him and being healed. The blind and the lame were coming to Him and being healed, still demonstrating His compassion, still demonstrating His power, still demonstrating what we heard sung in Psalm 103. He heals all your diseases. He casts out, yes. He overthrows, yes.

He also heals and preaches, compassionately, the gospel and the guilty flee and the rest remain, anger and love in perfect and divine balance. He frightens the guilty. He attracts the suffering. They came without fear of the Gentle Healer, without fear of the Gospel Preacher, and yet He made them afraid by warning them of judgment.

The blind and the lame, Matthew talks about, they tended to hang around the temple because that's where people came when they were feeling religious. That was a good place to beg. This time, they received more than just a few coins. They received sight and motion. These are the wonderful things that Jesus did, marvelous, astonishing proofs of His deity.

Might have thought this would be enough, one great glorious display of miracles on this Tuesday to seal in the minds of the people that this is truly the Messiah, but the response of the leaders was just greater anger. And eventually, they swayed the crowd who, later in the week, chapter 23:21, cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The leaders over this whole scene of compassion become irate.

They're further agitated, Matthew tells us, because there were boys in the temple ground who were praising Him in fulfillment of Psalm 8. The leaders were losing control, and so we read about the last evidence of His divine character. He was a divine mission with divine authority, faithful to divine revelation, showing divine compassion, and fulfilling divine purpose.

It was no shock that it turned the way it did. Verse 47, middle of the verse, "...but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him. And they couldn't find anything that they might do for all the people were hanging upon His words."

There was still a huge amount of mob emotion in His favor hanging over from the Monday celebration. He had cleansed the Temple. For most of the people, frankly, that was a plus, right? Because they were the ones being abused. And then the miracles continued, and then this incredible teaching from a man who had done what He had done in the Temple with such massive, physical, spiritual presence. Of course they were drawn to Him in interest temporarily.

The chief priests, the scribes and the leading men – chief priests were the ones who operated the temple – the scribes were the lawyers, the religious lawyers, the scholars who supported them with

their supposed studies of Scripture, the leading men is the collection of people in charge, maybe Sanhedrin, at least the ruling class. Collectively, they were in agreement. They wanted Jesus dead. Now, they wanted Him dead more than ever. And they were seeking, according to Mark 11:18, “how” to kill Him. They were having a hard time coming up with anything because He was so popular at the moment. All the people were hanging on His words.

The language in verse 48 is pretty graphic. They were constantly unable to find a strategy because all the people – here's another graphic word – were “hanging on His lips” is the literal translation of that Greek, giving Him strong attention. Of course no one ever spoke like Him.

Sadly, in a few days, the crowd thins out, screams for His blood. After His resurrection, only 120 believers in Judea gather and 500 in Galilee. He's rejected, rejected by the nation, rejected by the leaders, but that, too, fulfills God's purpose. Isaiah 53: “He was despised and rejected.”

Right on schedule. They were seeking to destroy Him, just looking for a way to do it, and right on schedule because He would die as God's chosen sacrificial Lamb on Friday. All they needed was a way to get to Him. They found it eventually in Judas and in the manipulation of the crowd who, by Friday, were unfulfilled in their expectation of what they wanted Jesus to do.

In a sense, it's still that way. The religious leaders, the theologians, the scholars, the bureaucrats oppose Jesus, and the majority of people reject Him because He doesn't fit their picture of what a great Messiah, Deliverer, King should be. And there's always just a group of faithful believers, but nonetheless His majesty is equally clear, clear in His mission, His authority, His devotion to Scripture, His compassion and even in His rejection. This is exactly how God planned it.

And Jesus Christ, beloved, is the divine purifier. He is perfect in love, but He's also perfect in holiness. He is perfect in kindness, but He's also perfect in judgment. He is perfect in compassion, and He is perfect in vengeance. He cannot tolerate unrighteousness or deceit. And when He is refused in offering salvation, He becomes the Judge of every life. My prayer for you is that you would know Him as Savior and not as Judge.

Our Father, we come now to the end of our time of worship for this moment, brought to a stern and eternal point of consideration. We will live forever either worshipping Jesus Christ as Savior, or cursing Him as judge, either, in the joys and glories of heaven's bliss or the horrors and agonies of hell's torture. And judgment needs to begin at the house of God. This is a church. There are people here. This is Your place. Jesus comes to us here and says, “Is your worship true? Or are you a robber hiding in this place? Are you false, hypocritical, deceiver?”

Lord, do Your work of gracious salvation. Come to this congregation even today and to Your church and those who profess Your name. Come in compassion. Come to heal and forgive and save and

show the way of God in truth. Come with the gospel that sinners might repent before You have to come to throw them out as blasphemers.

Oh we grieve, Lord. We love Your church because we love You. We grieve over the hypocrites and the false and the liars and the manipulators and the blasphemers who name Your name and exploit people for their own good and gain. And we would ask You, Lord, to cleanse Your church, purge Your church from top to bottom, side-to-side, front to back, that it might truly bring glory to Your name.

Reach down into this congregation and literally enlighten every soul who has not yet embraced Christ in repentant faith that they may do that even this day. We would know You as Savior and the fullness of joy that that brings now and forever, not as Judge. For Your own glory, Lord, do Your work. Purge this place and this church by bringing Your gracious salvation to the hearts of any who desperately need to know You.

We thank You, Father, that You sent Your Son into the world not to condemn us but to save us. We pray that You would do Your saving work today, that You would be pleased to do that for Your own joy. These things we ask in the name of Your Son. Amen.

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