

In 1703... a fierce hurricane struck the coast of England. The lighthouse in that region had been smashed by the storm. Ships had run aground in an area known as "*the Goodwin Sands.*" ... Sailors took refuge in the masts of their ships until the tide receded. ... They were then able to walk on the exposed sand to await rescue from the nearby town of Deal. ... The stranded sailors signaled for help to the people in the town who watched them in their telescopes.

Boats were launched from the town... but not for the rescue of the stranded sailors. ... The stranded men were ignored. The boats were launched to probe the waves for valuable debris and salvage. ... The mayor of the town was appalled at the behavior of his greedy people. ... He pleaded with the local custom house to deploy the boats for rescue... but the official in charge refused.

Mayor Powell... with some help of volunteers... was finally able to seize these boats and launch a rescue mission that saved 200 men. ... They were unable to return in time to get the others that drowned when the tide returned. ... In all... **8000 sailors** drowned in this hurricane. ... The atrocity of this whole matter - was the greed of men that placed possessions over the lives of men that needed rescued. ... How could any civilized people be so caught up with blinding greed? (We are about to find out... and Jesus responds to it with a righteous anger.)

Last week in our study through Luke's Gospel... we saw Jesus pause before He entered Jerusalem to be crucified. We ended our study with Luke 19:41-44... (which describes how Jesus wept over the city.) The word is (actually) that He wailed very loudly.

There were a few factors that made him so emotional. ... I mentioned two reasons last week... * He wept over their incomprehension of Who He was and He wept because of the UNNECESSARY invasion and destruction by Rome that He saw in Jerusalem's near future... (That invasion occurred a little less than 40 years later - in 70 a.d.) ... But there was a third reason... and it is brought up in the next two verses that follow. As we pick up where we left off last week... we come to this third reason for Jesus' loud wailing. - He Wept over the religious leader's intoxication with greed ... and then He erupted in anger!

After looking at our passage today... we might have to re-think the often-quoted image of Christ: "*Gentle Jesus... meek and mild...*" He will not seem so meek and mild in our passage. ... Have you ever seen a table flipped over? ... This is a violent act. ... And to top it off... Jesus halted the traffic of those who were using the Court of Gentiles through God's Holy Temple - as a shortcut. ... He "*would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.*"

(Now) Jesus actually is the meekest... gentlest person who ever lived. He Himself said: "*for I am gentle and humble in heart.*" (That is found in Matthew 11:29.) ... (And) part of what Christ taught was this: "*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5).

(But hear me now!) ... Meekness is not weakness! ... It is (rather) strength under control. ... And you see that is what we find in our passage today. *Meekness has the strength to not defend oneself* (Jesus went to the cross... without defending Himself.) ... (However) - meekness will boldly

defend others. ... And on this occasion Jesus struck out in defense of the holiness of God the Father. ... [P A U S E] ...

This (also) is what determines what a righteous anger is. How do you know if your anger is a righteous anger? ... Well (ask yourself) what is driving it? ... (Do an honest evaluation.)

Sometimes we like to fool ourselves into believing that an outburst of anger that we had... was justified. It was justified because it was a “righteous anger”! (But how can you be sure?) ... Here is how: Are you mostly concerned with defending your OWN honor... respect... sense of significance... or even security.

Being incensed about all of the injustice around us that is getting worse... might seem like a righteous anger. But if a fear is mainly driving it... because it has... or it might soon affect you and your family... and you have been or might be hurt... or inconvenienced... - **that** probably is **not** a “righteous anger.” Righteous anger is not **self**-concerned – it is **God** concerned. Is it God’s honor that mostly consumes you? (That is how you know if it is a righteous anger.)

Before we examine Jesus’ righteous anger in our passage today... let’s acknowledge what we have already seen “righteous anger” to be. ... We have already seen (through Jesus’ loud wailing) that a righteous anger has a component of heartbreak (genuine empathy) for the perpetrators (whoever has done the evil.) Jesus cried over the very ones who were about to kill Him.

Does your heart (ever) break for those who absolutely infuriate you? ...human traffickers? ...child molesters? ...incompetent and corrupt politicians? ...indecent film makers? ... [P A U S E] ... Do you regard them as “animals” instead of lost human souls...? (How much of what we thought was righteous anger – really was/is...?) ... I am not saying that we should not be feeling any sense of disgust or revulsion... but aim it MORE at the sin – instead of primarily directing it at the sinner.

(You say) “*That’s impossible!*” – and you’re exactly right. God calls us to live an impossible life. The Christian life is impossible – without God’s enabling through His Holy Spirit (Who indwells every believer.) ... But please do not (falsely) claim that you have a righteous anger toward something – if God is not enabling you ... and you are not experiencing something that goes BEYOND your natural strength and ability.

Let’s examine (now) Jesus’ righteous anger... so we can better understand it...

Luke 19:45-46

In the verses just before these... we saw (last week) that Jesus entered Jerusalem... riding a donkey... while people waved palm branches at Him and shouted “*Hosannah – blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.*”

Jesus orchestrated that event because it fulfilled prophecy about the Messiah’s coming on a donkey (in Zechariah 9:9)... and what the crowd shouted was prophesied in Psalm 118:26. – BUT NOT ONLY THAT - Jesus was controlling the exact timing of when He was going to die. The religious leaders were planning to arrest Him AFTER the Passover... but

God the Father and Jesus' timetable was that Jesus would die **ON** PASSOVER – as the ultimate Passover Lamb (the once and for all sacrifice.) Jesus was accelerating the evil plans of the religious leaders.

(You MAY or MAY NOT know this) ... But the first thing on Jesus' agenda (His appearing in the Temple)... was also in fulfillment of prophecy... AND it was (also) done by Christ to accelerate His Own death (making it happen **ON** Passover... instead of **AFTER**.) We see the same divine control in both events. Entering on a donkey and His startling appearing in the Temple were both done for the same two reasons.

Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

¹ *“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.*

Malachi said Messiah would suddenly (or startlingly) appear in the Temple – and Boy(!) did He ever! ... And you have to know - that this appearance would definitely hasten His Own death.

But now let's talk about the WHAT and WHY of Jesus' actions in the Temple... (What are the other reasons... in addition to His fulfilling prophecy and *expediting* His Own death?) Why was Jesus so enraged...?

In order to know what happened... we need the other Gospel accounts. Luke's rendition is very brief. Luke describes Jesus' famous actions in ONE (notably concise) sentence: *“Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling.”* Luke goes on to mention that He accused them of turning His Father's house into a den of robbers... but that's it! No throwing over the money-changers tables... letting pigeons fly

out of their cages... or making a whip. (Those details we find in Matthew and Mark's Gospels.)

Matthew... Mark... and Luke all mention this happening at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry (during His final week.) John tells of an earlier time... that He (also) did it – at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. So He actually did this TWICE. Jesus showed His anger two different times in the Temple. Both times He was reacting to the ABUSE of the sacrifice system.

The abuse of God's house had grown out of worshipers' need to obtain unblemished animals for sacrifice (according to Leviticus 1:3)... and also from the annual requirement... *that every male Israelite pay a half-shekel temple tax* (which Exodus 30:11–14 tells them to do). But people from foreign countries used currency that wasn't a Jewish shekel. (The Law specifically called for shekels.) This necessitated changing money into the prescribed currency.

But exorbitant charges were made by the money changers... (What a scam!) ...and there was another huge scam taking place... In order to have an acceptable animal... Temple priests had to certify every animal. ... Priests... under direction of the High Priest... determined whether or not an animal qualified. So the High Priest (corruptly) used his authority to make himself rich.

Any animal that was not bought at the Temple (from an official seller) was likely to be refused. ... Historical records exist of transactions in which 3,000 livestock were brought to the temple court to be controlled by the High Priest and be sold as acceptable offerings. (That is A LOT of money! And the High Priest got a cut from them all.) The Temple court was large

enough to contain 13 football fields... and was full of stalls selling animals and exchanging foreign currency into shekels.

(NOW)... In order to have one of these stalls where you could over-charge the people coming there to worship... and make yourself rich... you had to rent it from the High Priest (and pay him a “pretty penny.”) – He and his family (as well as the sellers) amassed a great deal of wealth for themselves on the backs of sincere worshippers. It was a mafia-like system of extortion... because if you did not buy your animal at a Temple stall... a priest was likely to find some real or imagined blemish... and reject it. You could not worship God – unless you line the pockets of the High Priest... and his cronies.

(In Jesus’ day) this scam was under the control of the former high priest Ananias... whom the Jewish Historian - Josephus - cynically called “*the great procurer of money.*” That has to be an understatement. He was raking it in (hand-over-fist.)

A huge religious con-game had been going on for years in “the temple area”... specifically in the Court of the Gentiles... the only place in the temple where a non-Jew could go to pray and meditate. It was supposed to be a place for Gentile worship and evangelism! But this noisy... smelly... and dirty environment had become completely over-taken and unusable for prayer and meditation.

The priests were to be witnessing to their “pagan” neighbors and telling them about the one true and living God. But instead of being devoted to evangelism... large scale extortion was taking place in the Court of the

Gentiles. (So much for evangelism!) ... Instead of *praying for* the people - the priests were *preying on* the people! ... [P A U S E] ...

Suddenly in walks the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Malachi's prophetic "*suddenly the Lord ... will come to his temple*" was *fulfilled*. ... It is not difficult to picture the righteous indignation that must have *flashed* from the eyes of Jesus when He drove out all who were engaged in this *reprehensible* racketeering.

Luke 19:46

The sentiment expressed by Jesus is based on the truths that King Solomon expressed at the dedication of the Temple... as recorded in 1 Kings chapter 8. ... On that day... amidst great celebrating... the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Most Holy Place. When that happened... a great cloud of smoke (supernaturally) filled the temple of the LORD... and the priests could not perform their service.

After blessing the people... King Solomon spread out his hands toward Heaven and offered a dedicatory prayer... which (*what I am about to read*) was a part:

1 Kings 8:41-43 (ESV)

⁴¹ "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake ⁴² (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³ hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

This is why Jesus said what He did. The very place where all of this racketeering took place... was supposed to be used for Gentile

evangelism... worship... and prayer. ... It was the ***only*** place a non-Jew was allowed to enter at the Temple.

(You see...) Gentiles were not to be ignored. The Temple was to be a house of prayer for them (as well.) Isaiah (among others) made that clear.

Isaiah 56:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Jesus’ second brief quotation was from Jeremiah 7:11—“*but you have made it a ‘den of robbers’.*” ... This is a line from Jeremiah’s famous temple speech that was a warning to the people of Israel who had embraced wickedness as a way of life... and imagined that their being Israelites and possessing the temple would keep them safe. Jeremiah (the prophet) warned that destruction of the temple was coming.

To get the feel for this... we must imagine Jeremiah standing in front of the doors of Solomon’s temple... with the huge freestanding pillars that were named Jakin and Boaz on either side (symbolizing God’s power.) Jeremiah told approaching worshipers:

Jeremiah 7:2-4 (ESV)

² ... Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. ³ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’

God's people must not allow confident musings like "*This is the temple of the LORD. This is where God dwells.*" It will NOT save them if they do not repent. The prophet argued that such "safety" was a popular delusion for those who had turned the temple into a robber's den:

Jeremiah 7:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ *Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known,*
¹⁰ *and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations?* ¹¹ *Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.*

(People today use the church in this same manner. ... "*I don't need to stop sinning. ... I'll just go to church this Sunday and then I'll be safe...*")

Those who thought they were safe... were standing in harm's way. (And) in case they doubted it... Jeremiah continued with the next verse: "*Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel*" (v. 12). ... Shiloh was where the Tabernacle of God once was... but in Jeremiah's time it was completely obliterated!

So Jesus... in His mercy and grace... reminded them of something they would have known about – but were ignoring. If the Temple fails to fulfill its function as a house of prayer... because the people are so corrupt... it will be destroyed. ... (Neither the Temple... or a modern-day church... can be used as a safety net for continued sin.) ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Jesus FIRST cried. He mourned for the despicable evil-doers... and then He threw over the tables and drove out the scoundrels - for two reasons: 1)

the honor of His Father's name... and 2) because of the zeal Jesus has for all people's eternal souls. (In other words... He was concerned for His Father's will.) ... And then He graciously reminded them about a truth that *they already knew*. ... He didn't simply walk away in His anger – like you or I might have done. (“Aaaaah...*You all deserve the fate that is coming to you! And I can't wait to see it happen!*”) ... This was a righteous anger.
... [P A U S E] ...

Why did the Temple officials allow Jesus to do all of this...? Why wasn't He stopped...? ... (**ANSWER**) It was the hand of God the Father that enabled Jesus to cleanse the temple. What else would have kept the Roman garrison (who were charged with keeping the peace) from intervening?

And (apparently) the affect that it had *lasted for several days*. Jesus appropriated the Temple for His Own use. He cleansed it... and then He used it for the purpose by which it was built. ... The religious leaders WANTED to take action against Him... but were afraid of the crowds who showed their support of Him.

Luke 19:47-48

From here to the end of chapter 21 the temple is Jesus' pulpit. His temporary commandeering of the temple and His exposition from within the temple's walls is *one vast messianic act*. ... His use of the temple was the *last and ultimate glory* of the temple... because it would be destroyed... just as Jesus would be destroyed at the end of the week.

The people were attentive to hear Jesus. They continually hung onto everything Jesus had to say. ... These folks listened... but unfortunately (we know) that they did not **act** upon what they heard from the lips of

Christ. How do we know that...? Because they so quickly turned against Him (even) before the week was out... just a few days later.

I am going to close today with the instruction of James... that we are to ACT upon what we hear.

James 1:22-26 (ESV)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. ²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Christ wept because the loss of Jerusalem's opportunity to change the direction of their lives and the nation. The religious leaders were consumed with greed... bitterness... and hate for the Lord... because He messed up their money-making machine in the Temple courts. ... He wept because He came to His own... but His own received Him not. ... He yearned for them to know His salvation... but they were not interested and He knew what was in store for them in eternity.

Is Jesus mourning over **YOU** today? ... Do not waste your opportunity.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (ESV)

² For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.