



Moments with Jesus

WEEK 4 - CLEARING THE TEMPLE

OVERVIEW

One of the more startling moments of Jesus' ministry was his clearing of the temple: overturning tables, scattering animals, fashioning a whip to drive out moneychangers, pouring out their money, etc. This moment of passion seems to conflict with our image of Jesus as a meek and mild teacher. However, in this scene Jesus gave his followers an understanding of the grand tradition he was a part of, standing in a long line of prophets who zealously defended God's heart for the world even when the Israelites had disastrously missed the point. Jesus cleared the temple because the religious establishment in Jerusalem had turned Torah-obedience into a marketing scheme and were taking advantage of the vulnerable. It is notable that in Matthew's account, after the temple is cleared the blind and lame come to Jesus in the temple courts for healing. Yes, our savior is meek and mild, but he is zealous when it comes to establishing God's true kingdom on this earth.

How have we missed the point of God's heart for the world? Have we cheapened God's grace or turned following Jesus into rote religion? What would it mean for us to replace our selfishness with zeal for the purposes of Christ?

*The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,'
but you have turned it into a den of thieves!*

Matthew 21:13

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the four accounts of this "moment with Jesus": Matthew 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22. What differences do you notice that hint at each author's purpose in telling this story?
2. Barry mentioned several threads woven through this story that help us realize the significance of the event: the Messianic thread, the Prophetic thread, and the thread that Jesus is the Temple, the way for humanity to return to Eden. What can we learn from each of these about Jesus' character?
3. Barry said that this moment with Jesus is like what we learned in Micah - Jesus is afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted. If you are being honest with yourself, are there any tables in your life that need to be flipped? Does your life and faith look like the justice and peace and mercy and generosity that God calls us to? Or does the way you live out your faith put up walls between others and God? Or are you struggling to accept that Jesus is flipping tables for you and wants to bring you into God's presence?
4. Read the questions in the overview above. Reflect personally and also as a church to answer these questions.

RESOURCES

gracechurch.us