



PART 2: NO MORE FIGS

Sermon Notes

Text: Mark 11:12-25

Introduction

The Gospel writer, Mark, sandwiches the story of the Temple Cleansing in the middle of the story of Jesus cursing the fig tree. Jesus is not acting out in an uncontrolled emotional response to his hunger when he curses the fig tree. He is enacting a live parable that correlates to his actions in the Temple.

Jesus was hungry, he came to a source of food, and he found no food.

“A House of Prayer for all Nations”

The vendors commandeered the Court of the Gentiles as a marketplace, thus excluding “all nations” except Israel from Temple worship.

Places of worship should be places that remove barriers which keep people from experiencing the love of God; not places that create barriers.

“A Den of Robbers”

A den of robbers is not the place robbers go to do their robbing; it is the place robbers go to hide out after they have done their robbing.

Jeremiah 7:9-11 “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not

known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my name, and say, “We are safe” - safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.”

Our relationship with God should not be limited to just using him as a forgiveness machine, which allows us to live however we want outside the church walls, while coming inside to find safety from the consequences of sin.

“When I was a kid I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realized that the Lord doesn’t work that way so I stole one and asked Him to forgive me” ~Emo Philips

When our worship turns into mere religion it does 2 things:

- 1) Creates barriers instead of access
- 2) Creates systems that enable us to abuse the grace of God

“Like the godfather going to Mass on Sunday morning or going to confessional before returning to his life of crime, religious systems make it all too easy for self-centered people to find comfort in familiar rituals without experiencing a change of heart or committing to a life of love” ~Bruxy Cavey

And Jesus has had enough. ***So he changed everything:***

1. Jesus redefines temple

v. 23

The Temple served Israel as the intersection of heaven and earth; the place where God met with his creation.

Jesus claims to be the new Temple (John 2:19-21) - the intersection of the human and divine.

The Apostle Paul extends the definition of Temple to apply to the church, which is the body of Christ:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s Temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”

With faith, we can throw the religious system, along with the Temple, “into the sea” (v. 23) and have direct access to God through Jesus.

2. Jesus redefines prayer

v. 24

Jesus gives access to God through prayer outside of the religious system. We can now pray in the authority of Jesus - instead of in the authority of the Temple - as we approach the Father (John 14).

3. Jesus redefines forgiveness

v. 25

In the Temple system people had to go to the Temple, meet with a priest, and offer a sacrifice to be forgiven. Now, Jesus is the new Temple, he is the new priest, and he is the once and for all sacrifice for sins. He makes the religious system redundant.

“The primary goal of Jesus was to tear down religion as the foundation for people’s connection with God and to replace it with himself” ~Bruxy Cavey

“The revelation of God is the abolition of religion” ~Karl Barth

We don’t follow a religion. We follow Jesus. He is the way. He is the truth. He is our life.

Conclusion:

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Life Group Discussion

1. Warm up: Do you ever get “hangry” (hungry and angry at the same time). What are you like when you’re hangry?

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2. What was one take out for you from the sermon?

3. Read John 2:12-25. What stands out to you in this passage?

This is John’s account of Jesus cleansing the Temple. There are at least two variations in John’s story that differ from Mark: 1) He tells it as though it happened near the beginning of Jesus’s ministry instead of at the end. This might be because Jesus cleansed the Temple twice, or because John wasn’t concerned about chronology as much as the message he was trying to convey. 2) He emphasizes Jesus judgement on the sellers for turning the Temple into a market; whereas, Mark emphasizes the exclusion of the Gentiles and the abuse of God’s grace.

- What can we learn from John’s account that expands on/adds to Mark’s version of this event?
- How does Jesus redefine Temple in this account?

4. The Temple was supposed to be a “house of prayer for all nations”, but the people turned it into a “den of robbers” (v. 17).

- How can we apply the calling of being a house of prayer for all nations to contemporary church? What can we do to make everyone feel welcome?
- What does it mean to make church into a den of robbers? How can we tell if we are abusing the grace and forgiveness of God?

5. Pray together:

- a) Pray for people to experience freedom from religion, and be welcomed into a relationship with God through Jesus.
- b) Pray that our church would truly be a place where people are welcomed to experience God’s grace and truth.
- c) Other requests:
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Bethel Church Penticton - Sunday, March 22, 2015 - Pastor Dave Funk