"The Temple and the Tree"
July 27, 2014

Mark 11:12-26

<u>CORE</u>: If we misunderstand Jesus' heart, we can misjudge His behavior—as He cleanses the Temple and curses a fig tree. Yet, His actions are not the result of an uncontrolled temper. Rather, they reveal His passionate devotion to bring us into an uncluttered, uncompromised relationship with Him. There is nothing <u>passive</u> about Him—He is <u>highly intentional</u> & <u>fiercely purposeful</u>!

1. **<u>THE TEMPLE</u>**

[1st Temple was built by Solomon—destroyed by Babylon (586 B.C.); 2nd Temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel as Israel returned from Babylonian captivity; 3rd Temple—which Jesus entered here—was rebuilt by Herod the Great in 20 B.C.—only to be destroyed by Romans in 70 A.D.]

- **The Temple was more than a building to Jesus—it represented our <u>posture</u> toward <u>God's presence</u>. The way we <u>respond to</u> & <u>relate to</u> Him.**
- **Once it had been filled with such glory—the priests could not even stand up (2 Chronicles 7)**
- **Now, it had become a marketplace…one of 4 market places established by the religious leaders on the Mount of Olives**
    - **Though required to bring animals from their own flocks (Deut. 12:5-7), it had become more convenient to buy them at the temple**
    - **Money to purchase them had to be changed into the official temple currency—the shekel; a silver coin honoring "Hercules" as "holy & invincible" and Tyre as a "holy city of refuge."**
    - **Doves were sold to the poor and the widows (Lev. 5:7) at ridiculously high prices—taking advantage of them.**
    - **The entire "Court of the Gentiles" had become a marketplace (NOTE: See floor plan of Temple) no longer devoted to worship**
    - **Had become a "short cut" from Mt. of Olives to Jerusalem**
- **Jesus reminded them of the original purpose of the temple as "a house of prayer *for the nations*" (Isaiah 56:7)**
    - **Jesus expressed His heart for the Gentiles (Mark's target audience); *"This is how important gathering ALL nations is to Me!"***
    - **They had slipped into a slow but steady departure from reverencing the LORD.**
    - **What began as a "convenient" way of serving travelers—had become a self-serving way to exploit them**
    - **They actually were preventing them from experiencing His presence and expressing their gratitude & honor.**

- **"Thieves" were common in this area (NOTE: The Good Samaritan story on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem)**
- **"Den"- an established stronghold; their home base of operation; fully condoned by the religious leaders**
- **The "cleansing of the temple" actually could have taken a significant amount of time; a planned & sustained aggression!**

2. <u>THE FIG TREE</u>

- **Jesus was expressing His deep grief over <u>fruitless living</u>**
  - **Temple without prayer**
  - **Fig tree without figs** *(NOTE: This time of year, fig trees had edible buds—a sign of much fruit in the fall season. This tree had leaves—but no buds. No fruit to come in the fall.)*
- **Prayer is about so much more than <u>collecting from</u> God. It's about <u>connecting with</u> Him. It's about moving with Him as He restores people & nations.**
- **"This mountain" refers to the "Mount of Olives"—a place of extreme activity**
  - **Jesus frequently taught there, imparting powerful spiritual truths. (NOTE: Mark uses the word *"ekplesso"* to describe their reaction—*"to be out of one's mind with amazement"*)**
  - **It was the place where Jesus would pray—facing great spiritual opposition—yet strengthened by an angel (Luke 22:43)**
  - **There He also faced His darkest moment—betrayed & arrested**
  - **Yet, from there He would ascend to His throne in Heaven (Acts 1:1-12)**
  - **At His return, His feet will touch down on this mountain (Zech. 14:4)**
  - **His message: "You may face mountains of opposition as you declare & demonstrate My good news. I can move mountains. And bring significant breakthroughs!"**
- **This kind of prayer life requires your <u>faith to grow</u> and <u>forgiveness to flow.</u>**
  - **You must first <u>receive My mercy</u> in order to <u>extend My mercy</u> to others.**
  - **Luke 7:47- Those who know they've been "forgiven much—love much!"**

CONCLUSIONS

1. "The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart." (Jeremiah 30:24)

- **His anger is NOT erratic emotions, a loss of self-control, or a bad temper…**
- **It IS God's whole-hearted opposition to sin!** ***(He can't simply overlook sin or compromise His standards)***
- **His anger is His predictable, steadfast antagonism against everything that would keep us from Him!!!**

NOTE: The opposite of ANGER is APATHY—neutral, indifferent. The scariest experience would be to have an apathetic God, who simply doesn't care!!

Jesus is not ANGRY AT us…He's ANGRY FOR us!

AT- retaliates	**FOR- reconciles**
AT- seeks retribution	**FOR- seeks reconciliation**
AT- desires to "get even"	**FOR- desires to "get closer"**
AT- despises the alienated person	**FOR- despises the alienation**
AT- builds walls	**FOR- builds bridges**

3. **Jesus came to overthrow the thief who robs you of life. He came to give us LIFE—ZOE life (John 10:10)—life like He lives life. Powerful and free!**

He did not come to merely give us "BIOS"—mere biological life; mere existence. He despises "forms of godliness."

He desires that we experience "the fullness of God"!!!!!