

Palm Sunday, Luke 19:35-48

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- [0 : 0 0] Father God, thank you for the Bible. Thank you that Jesus came to be king. Help us to know you better as we hear from your Bible together.
- Amen. Brilliant. Well, we've heard about Jesus heading into Jerusalem, and the first place he goes is the temple. And what we're learning here as we see Jesus in the temple is that things aren't always what they seem.
- And I guess we're used to that sometimes in life, aren't we? If you just think about your favorite superheroes, this guy doesn't look like a superhero, does he? Peter Parker.
- But actually, he's Spider-Man. Okay, what about this one? People know who that is? That's Clark Kent. Looks a bit nerdy with those glasses on, but take the glasses off, step into a phone box.
- He's a superhero. Things aren't always what they seem. And in our true story from the Bible, the thing that wasn't really what it seemed was the temple. The temple seems to be full of goodness.
- [1 : 0 8] But actually, it's not. See, when Jesus goes into the temple, it's not like us walking into St. Silas on a Sunday, because there's nothing really special about our building.
- We like our building, but it's not special in the way the temple was. Back then, the temple was God's house. And more than anywhere else in the whole world, the temple is where God lives.
- You go there to meet God. And it looks like it's full of good stuff going on in the temple. There are sacrifices. People go because they're sorry for what they've done wrong, and they say a prayer like we do.
- But they used to bring an animal, and they'd sacrifice the animal. And it was as though the animal took the sin away. There would have been people praying in the temple. Prayer's a good thing.
- And there would have been people teaching the Bible in the temple, in the courts, and people would go and listen to them. And if you'd been there, you'd have thought, this is a really good place.
- [2 : 1 1] There's loads of good stuff going on in here. God must be really happy about these people and what they do. But things are not what they seem. Jesus does something really dramatic.
- He drives out the people who were selling the animals for people to sacrifice. Why? Well, then he tells us why.
- We've got the words on the screen. He entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.
- So the temple seems to be full of goodness, but actually it's a den of robbers. What does Jesus mean?

Well, he might mean that he's crossed because people are selling things in his temple. That's what lots of people think. But that doesn't really make sense, does it? Because they were just selling animals so that people could sacrifice them to pray to God.

[3 : 17] The real problem is what's going on in people's hearts. It's not what you could see. Did you notice the first thing Jesus said as he was driving out those money changers?

He said, it is written. What do you think he meant by it is written? Where do you think it was written? It was written in the Bible.

Jesus is speaking about things that were already in the Bible. And he quotes from two Old Testament prophets. The first one was the prophet Isaiah. And Isaiah lived 700 years before Jesus.

And God had promised through Isaiah that one day in the future, his temple would be a place where people from all nations could come and praise God. So, if only we could watch the news from 700 BC and see what it was like when Isaiah first came on the scene and brought that message and that promise.

That's what we're going to do. We're going to watch the news. 700 BC. Let's see what happens so we can learn what Isaiah meant. Great. So do you see what the people, what God's plan was for his people?

[4 : 30] They would live such good lives as they worship God that other people in other nations would see that and they would think their God must be the one true God. And they would go to the temple and the temple would be this house of prayer for all nations.

Just like today, if you're a Christian, what God wants from us is that we live such good lives for God out in the world that people would think, I want to know more about their God.

Even if they've never thought about Jesus before, they would think, I want to know more about him because of the way my friend lives, the way they love me and love their God. So Jesus said, let your light shine so that men might see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

So that's what God wanted from his temple and in Jesus' day, it was not happening. The temple hadn't become the house of prayer for all nations and God was not happy with his people.

But do you remember the second thing that Jesus said? He said, my house will be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.

[5 : 38] That was from the prophet Jeremiah, a hundred years after Isaiah, 600 years BC. In Jeremiah's time, God said he was going to bring judgment on his people because they didn't really love God.

So they weren't really living for him and they were still going to the temple. They thought we're okay with God because we've got our temple and we can go there. But God saw how they were living during the week.

Let's watch our news program again a hundred years later and see what Jeremiah was saying. Joy. So great. Can you see that things were not as they seemed?

Jesus says to the people, you've turned my house into a den of robbers. And what he's saying is, you people, you think you're okay with God. God, you're living selfish, greedy lives.

You're ignoring God's commands. But you think, well, I'm fine because I go to the temple and I make my sacrifice. And the truth is that lots of us fall into that trap today.

[6 : 40] This is the person who might be pretty beastly during the week. They don't really think much about God's commands and how God wants them to live at all. But then they think, but I am a good person because I go to church on a Sunday.

As long as I get my bread and wine, I've ticked that box. You don't want to get too into that religion stuff, but you go to church now and again just to keep God happy.

I say my prayers, but really, I live for myself during the week. Then maybe I come along to the youth fellowship and think, God must be happy with me because I turned up for something.

And all the while, we're putting other people off becoming a Christian because other people look at us and think, well, if that is how Christians live, then I'm not very impressed with their God.

I don't want to know that God. And that makes God really sad when we live like that and treat Him like that. It made God very angry that the people were living like that.

[7 : 45] And we need to think to ourselves, would God say something like that about us and the way we treat Him during the week? Are we trying to fool Him with our religion?

That's the first thing that wasn't what it seemed in Jesus' time. The temple seems to be full of goodness, but actually, it's a den of robbers. But secondly, and more briefly, the second thing that isn't what it seems is Jesus.

See, Jesus seems to be a reject, but actually, He's the temple. He's just shown us that the temple isn't really God's place anymore, so God is going to need a new place.

And God had still made that promise, hadn't He, that one day, He'd have a temple that would be a house of prayer for all nations. And in the very next chapter of Luke's Gospel, Jesus says this in verse 17, Jesus looked directly at them and asked, then what is the meaning of that which is written, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. That's a verse from the Bible about building the temple, but Jesus is using it now. It's very mysterious. He's saying the builders, it's as though they're building the temple and there's a stone and they don't think it's any good and they get rid of it and then later they come back to it and it becomes the main stone for the new temple.

[9 : 15] And Jesus is saying that verse is about Him. He's being rejected by the people a week later, five days later, they're going to crucify Him. He's the stone that's rejected, but He is God's plan for a new temple.

He is the place where God truly lives. He's the light of the world and He's going to live a life that's so special and so beautiful it draws up in people from every nation to know God.

So He is the house of prayer for all nations. We're not always the people we should be, just like those people in the temple at that time. And we deserve the judgment that Jesus brought on the temple.

But instead, Jesus comes to die as our sacrifice so that we can come to know God through Him. and now He puts His Spirit in our hearts so that we can be the temple today.

God's living in us if we're His people and as Jesus' people, we're to bring in people from all nations to know God by living great lives for Him.

[10 : 23] So He says, you're now the light of the world. Go and let your light shine so that people from all nations can come to me and pray to God with me as their temple.

So we're going to pray now. We're going to thank Jesus for what He's done. We might want to say sorry for the ways we sometimes don't treat Him as we should. But let's pray that we will let our light shine today.

Let's pray. Now when I pray with my family, if we're saying a prayer, we usually start with a wow prayer about something good about God. And when we do a wow prayer, we put our hands in the air. So can we do that? That's how people prayed in the first century.

So arms in the air. I don't think they said wow. But arms in the air. Wow. Thank you, Father God, for giving us Jesus as our temple so that through Him people from every nation, including Scotland, can know You.

Lord Jesus, we're sorry that sometimes we don't live for You in Your world. We don't let You be king. But we thank You that You came to save us. So please help us by Your Spirit to be Your temple today.

[11 : 29] Help us to keep Your commands so that Your light shines out of us and people see our good deeds and put their faith in You. Amen.