

“Cleaning up the Temple” (Mark 11:15-17)

We just started the new series “Being Set Free.” Today we will continue to study from Mark 11. Let’s begin with quick review.

In order to show that Jesus is the promised king, a colt was used. In order for Jesus to receive praise, the colt was used.

There was one essential thing in order for the colt to be used. That was to untie the colt. The colt was tied there. Jesus couldn’t ride on it to enter Jerusalem, if it was still tied. The colt had to be untied. It had to be set free.

And Jesus’ disciples. As long as they remained in the common sense of the world and human reason, they couldn’t have carried out Jesus’ word. They were set free, and followed Jesus’ word, and went out. They experienced the power of Jesus’ word, and experienced that his Word is truth. Not only that, but one of the prophecies about the Messiah was fulfilled through them. Without knowing, they were used for the fulfillment of God’s prophecy.

God uses each one of us for his glory. He uses us so that his will be done on this earth. For this, we need to be released, need to be set free. We are bound by so many things although we may not be aware of it. As we are freed from these bondages, we become able to freely live out the Word of God.

Today we will study “Cleaning up the Temple.”

1. Temple

15-17

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: " 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations! ? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.' "

Here we see money changers and those selling doves. In the gospel of John, we can also see there were those selling cattle and sheep too (John 2:14). Basically they were to be offered as sacrifices. So people who came to the temple didn’t have to bring sacrifices all the way from a distance. They could just buy

them there. So originally they sold animals to help those who came to the temple to worship. But gradually and imperceptibly, their profit became more important than the original purpose. And there are people who use the temple courts as a path way to bring their goods. For them the temple is a means to make their works easy.

They were in the temple, but they miss the main point. They fail to notice the true purpose of the temple. For them the temple is “all about me.”

“Hallowed be my name. My will and desire will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” So-called religions and faith in the world are almost the same. If we are not careful, Christianity and Church today will end up being the same as those.

I want to begin by giving an example. The example is eating food. What is the purpose of eating food? Well, God when he made us in his image decided that we were going to be dependent on some biological and physiological processes, including taking food into our bodies to keep us alive, to nourish us. And that's the main point of eating food. And when we miss the main point of what eating food is we can make ourselves really sick.

Now the reality is food tastes good. But if I simply put things into my mouth and swallow them because they taste good, I'm missing the point that God made food for. Does it taste good? Yes. But the point is not that it tastes good. Is food pleasurable? It is. But if I eat just to make me feel good I'm going to end up with problems.

Food can fill our emptiness, whether in my body or in my soul. But if I try to fill that with food, and I just keep filling myself, I'm going to get problems here.

If we say that food is social in nature, it can be. It was nice to go out and eat with friends. There's a social aspect. But that's a side point. God gave us food and the need to eat to nourish our bodies. That's the main point for eating food. Everything else may be part of the point but not the main point. If we miss the main point, we are going to have problems.

Now I want to talk about the main point. What is the main point of God and man? What is the main point of the salvation?

To answer that question, we must think about what happened when man fell. What did human lose?

One of the first results that you see is that Adam was ashamed, afraid and he hid from God. We may consider that the main result of the fall is that man

no longer feels good, not happy. Then the salvation is all about what makes me feel good. If I don't feel good, if I'm not happy, if I have stress, if I'm sad, depressed, then I come to Jesus, he will make me feel good. I come to church and worship God, I will be to feel good, I can have a happy life.

Another thing that was lost was marital harmony. Here's Adam and Eve, and they must have had a pretty good relationship. But now all of a sudden, they lost it, and argued with each other and blamed each other. And the problem moved to their sons. One son killed another son. Does God heal our marriage? Yes, he does. Does God restore our family? Yes, he does. But it's not the main point of salvation.

Adam and Eve are living in a really nice place, Eden, paradise. A result of the fall was they lost that, and they left Eden. If we think that the whole problem was that we lost this great place to live, then we consider that the salvation is a matter of how we can have a better life, ease, nice place to live, comfort, house, cars, how we can get that.

Also, Adam lost a good job. Now he's worried about his finances. He's worried about the future. And if we see that's the main problem, then our salvation and our perception of who God is and his role in our life is God wants to take care of your finances, and God wants to bless you with a good job.

At the fall, another thing happened. Pain and suffering came into the world. And if we consider that is the main lost, the salvation is healing. If you don't get healing, you feel you are out of God's favor.

After Adam and Eve sinned what happened to them is the physical death along way of sickness. Who wants to go to hell? Nobody wants to go to hell. And the problem we have in the fall is now we're bound for death and hell. And so God's whole point is we're not going to go to hell. And so the message becomes, "You're afraid of going to hell, aren't you? Come to Jesus, come to the church. God's going to save you from hell."

What's the problem? The problem is not wanting to go to hell does not equal loving God. Wanting to go to heaven doesn't equal earnestly desiring to have the relationship with God.

If the main point is going to heaven not to hell, Jesus is just the taxi that you take to get there. Jesus happens to be the airlines that you're flying on. But Jesus said I am the resurrection. I am the life. So the whole point of this is not about going to heaven. The whole point of heaven is, a point of eternal life is the

point of enjoying forever an uninterrupted fellowship the presence of the one, who died for us and restored us to the relationship that God wanted us to have.

We need to be clear on what was lost. Why did God make us in His image? To know him, to love him, to have fellowship with him. The whole problem in the garden is that man lost his relationship with God, with Jesus. When the relationship with him was broken, everything else fell apart. And the main point of salvation is being restored to the relationship with him, nothing else compares with that.

What was happening at the temple in Jerusalem? They were certainly in the temple. They come in and out of the temple. But their hearts were turned elsewhere. Their actions revealed their hearts that was saying, "It's all about me." Jesus drove them out from the temple. He cleaned up the temple to make the temple the temple.

God will clean up our hearts. God will set us free so that we can freely have fellowship with Him, we can freely receive his love and freely love him with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and all our strength.

2. Prayer

22-24

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³ "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

God shows his greatness through his Word. And he will let us experience his greatness. God is God because he can do things which human beings cannot understand. We can experience God's greatness.

God will take away our filters and make our faith active. One of the filters is that we sometimes push God into human reasons.

Say to the mountain, "Go and throw yourself into the sea"? That's foolish! Feed 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish? Impossible! Walk on

the water? Cannot! Calm the storm? Never! Heal the sick?! You must be kidding me! Drive out evil spirits? Give me a break!

But we still want to believe God, so we somehow push the Word of God and God himself into human ideas. But if we do that, we can't really come to know Him. Because that is the god who was pushed into human ideas, who is not really God at all. God wants to free us from that. He will release us from human ideas and reasons.

Prayer. What is the main point of prayer? Is it that my wish will be made come true? If you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will happen, everything will be done as you wish? Is it what prayer is? The point starts who God is. And what kind of relationship I have with him. God is love and righteousness. He created heaven and earth and the whole universe out of nothing. And I am loved and redeemed by this God, and made heir of his kingdom. I am his dearly loved child. So I can have a fellowship with this wonderful, great God as his dearly loved child.

In Luke 15, Jesus told this parable. There was a father, he had two sons. The younger brother asked his father to give him his share of the estate. That is surely his. But it should be given to him after his father's death. But he didn't care whether his father was alive or dead. He just wanted that money. "I am your son. I am entitled to receive it. I want it now."

He received the money, and left his father. Father's presence didn't mean anything to him. It's just troublesome to be with his father. Soon he had spent all the money, and he began to be in need. Suddenly he remembered that in his father's house, there are plenty of food. He decided to go back to his father's house. He hoped he could get a job there, so he could have food. For him, going back to his father's house means to get some food, to fill his empty stomach.

But when he returned, his father welcomed him as his child, not as his servant. And he celebrated his return.

But his elder brother was not happy. He vented his complaints which he had held in his heart for long time upon his father. "All these years I've been slaving for your business. But you never gave me even a young goat so I could have fun with my friends."

The father said, "My son, for me what is most important is to be with my children. I have once lost my youngest son. But now he has come back to me.

Compared to the restored relationship with him, my estate has no value. You are my child. You are always with me. Is it more valuable for you to receive a little goat than to be with me? For you, to be my child means to receive something from me for your enjoyment?"

If the main point of salvation is being restored to the relationship with God, what's the matter with prayer, just to spend time with the Almighty, no matter what the result? I don't do something for God, just to get something out of it. God is not, Jesus is not the means to some end, he is the end.

Does God, when I'm in a relationship with him, does God bring me to a place of healing where the internal stress, pressure, frustration, anxiety, guilt, shame can be relieved? Yes, thank God. Because of God, there is an opportunity for me to work on my marriage in success? Yes. Because of the things of the gospel that's going to spill over into my family life, it can if I work at it. Because of who God is and what he's doing in my life, can I be free of the fear of death and free of the fear of the devil, and can I work appropriately for the right reasons? Yes. But none of that, none of that matters and measures up to the fact of my relationship in itself with God.

Let me come back to my example. What is the main purpose for eating food? God gave us food and the need to eat to nourish our bodies, to keep us alive. That's the main point for eating food. Everything else may be part of the point but not the main point. If we miss the main point, we are going to have problems. It's the same for our spiritual life, God and man, salvation, prayer. Sometimes we lost what the main point is because we are human, not God. It's okay. If Jesus finds something in our minds, let him allow to clean up. Let's keep the main thing the main thing. Amen!

For the next time, we will continue to look at Mark 11, and focus on anger and fear.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

1) How do you answer to a 8-year-old child who asks you what is prayer, and why you pray?

2) During last week, how did you spend time with God intentionally? Let's remember it specifically. If there hadn't been those time, what your last week would have been? How would it have been different? Let's think about it as specifically as possible. How does this examination describe your relationship with God?

3) Read Luke 15:11-32. How does the younger son think about his relationship with his father? What about the elder son? On the other hand, how does the father think about his relationship with his children?

4) What is the challenge in your prayer life? What is it that is preventing you from praying? How can you overcome the obstacles? What kind of help do you need? From whom and when do you receive the help?