

Mark 11:15-19

March 5, '17

**MARCH IN MARK
“THE TEMPLE TROUBLE”**

(Before Scripture)

**EVERY SPRING, WE TALK ABOUT A PROBLEM WE
HAVE IN THE CHURCH.**

IT'S NOT JUST *THIS* CHURCH.

**IT'S A PROBLEM THAT EXISTS IN VIRTUALLY
EVERY CHURCH & IT'S A DIFFICULT PROBLEM TO
OVERCOME.**

**IT'S THE PROBLEM OF IGNORING A SIGNIFICANT
PORTION OF THE BIBLE BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE
OBSERVE HOLY WEEK.**

**I'VE SAID IT SO OFTEN YOU CAN PROBABLY
MOUTH THE WORDS ALONG WITH ME AS I SAY THEM.**

**WE MOVE SO QUICKLY FROM THE “*HOSANNA'S*”
OF PALM SUNDAY TO THE “*HE IS RISEN'S*” OF EASTER**

**THAT WE GIVE NO THOUGHT TO ALL THAT LIES
BETWEEN THE TWO.**

IT'S TRUE, ISN'T IT?

**A SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF
PEOPLE ATTEND WORSHIP ON PALM SUNDAY & THEN
ON EASTER THAN ON MAUNDY THURSDAY OR ANY
OTHER SERVICES THAT MIGHT BE OFFERED DURING
HOLY WEEK – WHETHER HERE OR ELSEWHERE.**

**THAT MAY NOT SEEM LIKE A BIG DEAL – BUT
LET'S PUT SOME PERSPECTIVE ON IT WITH A
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPELS.**

I DID SOME QUICK CALCULATIONS.

**THERE ARE 89 TOTAL CHAPTERS IN THE FOUR
GOSPELS.**

**OF THOSE 89 CHAPTERS, 25 OF THEM ARE
DEVOTED TO THE EVENTS THAT TAKE PLACE DURING**

**HOLY WEEK – THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN
JERUSALEM BETWEEN MONDAY & FRIDAY –
BETWEEN THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY ON PALM SUNDAY
& THE CRUCIFIXION ON GOOD FRIDAY.**

**I ADDED UP THE PAGES OF ONE BIBLE I HAVE AND
THE FOUR GOSPELS HAD 201 TOTAL PAGES.**

**OF THOSE 201 PAGES, FIFTY OF THEM WERE
DEVOTED TO THE EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK.**

**SO, BASICALLY, WE CAN CONCLUDE THAT 25% OF
THE GOSPELS ARE DEVOTED TO FIVE DAYS IN THE
LIFE OF JESUS THAT MOST OF US OVERLOOK
ENTIRELY.**

**THIS YEAR, DURING LENT, WE'RE GOING TO TRY
TO CORRECT THAT.**

**THIS YEAR, WE’LL SPEND THE SEASON OF LENT
LOOKING AT THINGS THAT TOOK PLACE ON THOSE
FIVE DAYS – MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY.**

**WE’RE GOING TO ALLOW THE GOSPEL OF MARK
TO BE OUR GUIDE AS WE DO SO AND WE’RE GOING TO
USE MARK FOR TWO REASONS.**

**FIRST OF ALL, “MARCH IN MARK” SOUNDS
BETTER THAN “MARCH IN LUKE” – OR JOHN OR EVEN
MATTHEW.**

**SECONDLY, AND OBVIOUSLY MORE
IMPORTANTLY, MARK IS THE ONLY GOSPEL THAT
ACTUALLY GIVES US DIVISIONS BY DAY SO THAT WE
CAN ACTUALLY DETERMINE FAIRLY CLOSELY WHAT
TAKES PLACE ON EACH DAY OF HOLY WEEK.**

**WITH ALL OF THAT IN MIND, LET'S ENTER
JERUSALEM ON MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK – THE DAY
AFTER PALM SUNDAY.**

**THE PASSAGE WE'RE READING IS THE INNER PART
OF WHAT'S KNOWN AS A "MARK SANDWICH" –
SOMETHING MARK DOES WITH REGULARITY.**

**THERE'S SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS ON ONE
SIDE (THE TOP SLICE OF BREAD) & IS CONTINUED ON
THE OTHER SIDE (THE BOTTOM SLICE OF BREAD)
WITH AN ENTIRELY SEPARATE EVENT IN THE
MIDDLE.**

**THE BREAD PART OF THIS SANDWICH IS THE
STORY OF THE WITHERING FIG TREE.**

**EVEN THOUGH – LIKE AN ACTUAL SANDWICH –
THAT STORY HOLDS THE STUFF INSIDE TOGETHER –
WE'LL NOT GET INTO IT THIS MORNING.**

**WE'LL ONLY BE LOOKING AT THE "MEAT" OF
THIS MARK SANDWICH - THE 15TH THROUGH 19TH
VERSES OF MARK'S 11TH CHAPTER – MARK 11:15-19.**

(After Scripture)

**WHEN WE THINK OF JESUS, A NUMBER OF
PICTURES MIGHT COME TO MIND.**

**WE MIGHT THINK OF HIM BLESSING LITTLE
CHILDREN OR WASHING THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES
OR HEALING THE SICK.**

**WE MIGHT REMEMBER HIM WALKING ON WATER,
STILLING THE STORM, OR BEING LED OFF TO A CRUEL
DEATH WITHOUT A WORD.**

**AS WE THINK OF THESE STORIES & THESE IMAGES
OF JESUS, WE WONDER HOW IN THE WORLD PEOPLE
TURNED ON HIM & WANTED TO KILL HIM.**

**AND THEN WE SEE A STORY LIKE THIS & WE
BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.**

**WHAT WE *DON'T* UNDERSTAND IS – WHY'D HE DO
IT?**

**WHY DID JESUS GO INTO SUCH A SPONTANEOUS
FIT OF RAGE THAT DAY?**

**WELL, FIRST OF ALL, I DON'T THINK THIS WAS A
“SPONTANEOUS FIT OF RAGE.”**

**I THINK IT WAS WELL PLANNED-OUT &
COMPLETELY THOUGHT-THROUGH.**

**THIS WAS CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED &
CHOREOGRAPHED.**

**IN THE PREVIOUS SECTION – THE STORY OF THE
PALM SUNDAY ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM – MARK
SAYS, “*THEN HE ENTERED JERUSALEM AND WENT INTO
THE TEMPLE; AND WHEN HE HAD LOOKED AROUND AT***

EVERYTHING, AS IT WAS ALREADY LATE, HE WENT OUT TO BETHANY WITH THE TWELVE.”

YOU SEE, I THINK THIS IS A HINT FROM MARK THAT JESUS SAW EVERYTHING THAT WAS TAKING PLACE & THEN CAME UP WITH HIS PLAN FOR THE NEXT DAY.

THIS WAS NO SPONTANEOUS FIT OF RAGE – IT WAS A WELL-THOUGHT BIT OF DRAMATIC ACTING.

JESUS WAS ACTING HERE AS A PROPHET.

PROPHETS HAD A PASSION FOR GOD AND GOD'S WAYS.

THEY USED BOTH WORDS AND ACTIONS TO GET THEIR MESSAGE OUT.

SOMETIMES THEY DID SOME STREET THEATER.

ISAIAH WALKED NAKED AND BAREFOOT FOR THREE YEARS TO ACT OUT THE COMING CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL TO THE BABYLONIANS.

JEREMIAH SMASHED A BIG CLAY JAR IN FRONT OF THE ELDERS TO ACT OUT THE COMING DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL.

WHEN JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE, HE'S TAKING ON THE ROLE OF A PROPHET.

THIS IS STREET THEATER WITH A PURPOSE.

HERE'S THE POINT OF THIS DRAMA THAT JESUS PLAYS OUT.

BEING A JEW IN JESUS' DAY WAS EXPENSIVE.

WORSHIPERS AT THE TEMPLE NEEDED TO BRING A SACRIFICE, AND THE SACRIFICE NEEDED TO BE WITHOUT BLEMISH.

IF YOUR ANIMAL HAD ANY DEFECT AT ALL, IT WASN'T ACCEPTABLE.

WHEN INSTRUCTIONS HAD BEEN GIVEN IN SCRIPTURE ABOUT SACRIFICES, MERCY WAS SHOWN TO THE POOR.

THOSE OF MEANS WERE REQUIRED TO BRING A SHEEP OR A GOAT OR AN OX - A SUBSTANTIAL SACRIFICE.

BUT THE POOR WERE ALLOWED TO BRING MUCH LESS - JUST A PAIR OF DOVES - AND STILL BE ACCEPTABLE.

THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF THE TROUBLE IN THE TEMPLE MAKE A POINT OF MENTIONING THAT JESUS WENT AFTER THE SELLERS OF DOVES. WHY?

BECAUSE THAT’S WHAT WAS REQUIRED OF THE POOR & EVEN *THAT* WOULD HAVE CREATED A TREMENDOUS BURDEN FOR THEM.

THAT’S WHAT ANGERED JESUS.

REMEMBER – HE WAS A STUDENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT & ON NEARLY EVERY PAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, YOU CAN HEAR GOD'S VOICE INSISTING ON JUSTICE AND CARE FOR THE POOR - THE WIDOWS, THE ORPHANS, THE DISADVANTAGED.

JESUS WAS ACTING HERE ON BEHALF OF THE POOR.

BUT THAT’S NOT ALL THAT TROUBLED JESUS THAT DAY – OR, TO BE MORE PRECISE, WHAT TROUBLED HIM THE DAY *BEFORE* – WHAT MOVED HIM TO CONCOCT THIS “STREET THEATER” DRAMA.

THE TEMPLE AREA COVERED THE TOP OF MOUNT ZION – ABOUT 30 ACRES.

THAT'S A PRETTY MASSIVE SPACE.

IT WAS SURROUNDED BY GREAT WALLS - OVER A THOUSAND FEET ON EACH SIDE.

THE WIDEST OUTER SPACE WAS CALLED “*THE COURT OF THE GENTILES.*”

ANYONE COULD GO THERE – JEWISH OR NOT.

AS YOU WALKED THROUGH THAT OUTER COURT, YOU CAME TO ANOTHER WALL.

THERE WERE SIGNS ON THIS WALL.

THE SIGNS CLEARLY WARNED GENTILES – NON-JEWS – TO VENTURE NO FURTHER: “*WHOSOEVER PASSES WILL HAVE ONLY HIMSELF TO BLAME FOR HIS ENSUING DEATH.*”

**THE NEXT WALL SEPARATED WHAT WAS CALLED
“*THE COURT OF THE WOMEN.*”**

**JEWISH *WOMEN* COULD COME THERE FOR
PRAYER AND SACRIFICE.**

**BUT THEY HAD TO STOP AT THE NEXT WALL,
WHICH LED TO “*THE COURT OF THE ISRAELITES.*”**

ONLY JEWISH *MEN* COULD GO IN THERE.

**THE INMOST COURT WAS “*THE COURT OF THE
PRIESTS,*” AND ONLY THE PRIESTS COULD GO PAST
THAT WALL.**

**THE INNERMOST WALL SEPARATED “*THE HOLY OF
HOLIES,*” AND ONLY THE HIGH PRIEST WENT IN
THERE, AND THEN ONLY ONCE A YEAR.**

**YOU CAN SEE WHAT IS BEING PICTURED HERE:
EXCLUSION, EXCLUSION, EXCLUSION.**

**THAT, TOO, IS WHY JESUS WAS ANGRY &
ENGAGED IN THIS STREET THEATER ACT OF PUBLIC
DEFIANCE.**

**IT'S WHY HE CALLS OUT TO EVERYONE THERE -
“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!”**

**JESUS ALWAYS REMINDED PEOPLE THAT GOD'S
KINGDOM IS FOR EVERYBODY.**

**REMEMBER ANOTHER TIME HE GOT ANGRY?
THE DISCIPLES TRIED TO KEEP SOME PARENTS
WITH THEIR LITTLE KIDS AWAY FROM JESUS.**

**HE BECAME ANGRY AND SAID, “THE KINGDOM OF
GOD BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE!”**

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD - THE FAMILY OF JESUS - IS
FOR EVERYBODY.**

JESUS KNOCKED DOWN THE WALLS.

**THAT'S WHAT HE WAS DOING IN THE TEMPLE
WITH HIS LITTLE BIT OF STREET THEATER.**

**IN CLEARING THE TEMPLE, JESUS IS MAKING A
STATEMENT ABOUT THE TWO THINGS CLOSEST TO
THE HEART OF GOD – CARE FOR THE POOR & THE
DOWNTRODDEN & A DESIRE TO BE IN LOVING
RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL PEOPLE.**

**AS WE CAN SEE FROM THE RESPONSE OF JESUS,
THESE ARE THINGS THAT MATTER TO GOD.**

**GOD CARES IMMENSELY ABOUT THE POOR, THE
NEEDY & THE MARGINALIZED & GOD WANTS TO
HAVE A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL PEOPLE.**

**SO - WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH US
TODAY?**

EVERYTHING.

**IN CLEARING THE TEMPLE, JESUS IS MAKING A
CRITICAL STATEMENT ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE
HOUSE OF GOD.**

**HE'S MAKING A STATEMENT ABOUT OUR
PERSONAL CALL AS ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS.**

**THIS ACTION OF JESUS INVITES US TO ASK
OURSELVES IF OUR CHURCH TRULY HAS ROOM FOR
ALL PEOPLE OR DO WE HAVE SUBTLE WAYS OF
CROWDING OUT SOME OF GOD'S CHILDREN?**

IS THERE REALLY ROOM HERE FOR EVERYONE?

**IS THERE ROOM IN YOUR PEW FOR THE MAN WHO
HASN'T BATHED OR THE PARENT WITH ACTIVE
CHILDREN?**

**IS THERE ROOM FOR THOSE OF DIFFERENT
RACIAL, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIOECONOMIC & ETHNIC
BACKGROUNDS?**

***"MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER
FOR ALL NATIONS."***

THAT DESIRE OF GOD HASN'T CHANGED.

**THIS HAS TO BE A PLACE WHERE ANYONE &
EVERYONE CAN COME AND MEET GOD.**

**IF WE HAVE DOORS THAT KEEP SOME FROM
ENTERING, THEN WE'RE NOT ALLOWING THIS PLACE
& THIS SPACE TO TRULY BE GOD'S HOUSE.**

**IN THIS PASSAGE, JESUS IS OVERTURNING MORE
THAN TABLES IN THE TEMPLE.**

**HE'S OVERTURNING ALL OF OUR CHERISHED
WAYS OF DOING THINGS.**

HE'S OVERTURNING THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

HE'S OVERTURNING THE WAY WE OPERATE.

HE'S OVERTURNING OUR VIEW OF THE WORLD.

**WE TALKED ABOUT IT JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO
WHEN WE CONSIDERED THE IDEA OF “*AN UPSIDE
DOWN WORLD.*”**

**THAT’S WHAT JESUS IS DOING WITH THIS STREET
THEATER DRAMA.**

**IN DOING SO, HE’S LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO
WILL BE SO MOVED BY IT, PEOPLE WHO WILL SO
CHALLENGED, PEOPLE WHO WILL BE SO INSPIRED,
THAT THEY’LL JOIN HIS EFFORT TO *TURN THE WORLD
UPSIDE DOWN.***

**I THINK THAT’S WHAT WAS SO FRIGHTENING TO
THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS & POLITICAL AUTHORITIES.**

**WE’VE TALKED A LOT ABOUT THE CONSTANT &
COMFORTING RE-ASSURING WORDS OF JESUS – “*DO
NOT BE AFRAID.*”**

WELL, HERE WE FIND PRECISELY THE OPPOSITE.

**AFTER THIS STREET THEATER DRAMA, WE READ
“THE CHIEF PRIEST & THE SCRIBES...WERE AFRAID OF
HIM, BECAUSE THE WHOLE CROWD WAS SPELLBOUND
BY HIS TEACHING.”**

**DEPENDING ON HOW YOU VIEW THIS EVENT,
YOU’RE LEFT EITHER AFRAID OR SPELLBOUND.**

**THE AUTHORITIES WERE AFRAID OF HIM & THE
WORLD WAS “SPELLBOUND.”**

**OTHER TRANSLATIONS USE – INSTEAD OF
“SPELLBOUND” – WORDS LIKE “AMAZED” OR
“ASTONISHED.”**

**THAT’S WHAT JESUS ASKS OF US AS HIS
FOLLOWERS.**

**HE ASKS US TO ACT IN WAYS THAT LEAVE THE
WORLD *SPELLBOUND* BY OUR LOVE, *AMAZED* BY OUR
COURAGE, *ASTONISHED* BY OUR RADICAL, INCLUSIVE**

**GENEROSITY & KINDNESS THAT WILL HELP HIM
“TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN” LIKE HE DID THOSE
TABLES IN THE TEMPLE.**

**WHY DON'T WE ALL JOIN THE “STREET THEATER
DRAMA TROUPE OF JESUS?” AMEN.**

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