

Learn From Me - Flipping Tables

Mark 11:15-19 (CSB)

They came to Jerusalem, and he went into the temple and began to throw out those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, 16 and would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. 17 He was teaching them: "Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves!" 18 The chief priests and the scribes heard it and started looking for a way to kill him. For they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was astonished by his teaching. 19 Whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.

The "He" in this story is Jesus! Does Jesus ever get angry? YES.

Jesus the man everyone knew for being gentle, patient, level headed.....comes in and starts flipping tables. As we learn from Jesus today, this does not give you the right to flip the Monopoly board over if you are losing. This doesn't give you permission to flip the couch over if your teens or husband haven't taken out the trash. This doesn't give you permission to storm in and start kicking people out of a restaurant because it's too busy and you don't want to wait.....

If you believe Jesus was sinless....I hope you do, otherwise none of the rest of this will matter to you.....but He was sinless yet got angry, flipped over tables and chairs, threw people out, and publicly accused them...

Do you know that even though Jesus did this, and did this without sinning, He did it with self-control.....He was not reckless, He was not acting out of His emotions, He had what we call righteous indignation.

What is indignation? This is displeasure at something unjust, it is righteous anger. Righteous anger is being angry about something that angers God Himself. What angers God? Sin.

We see Jesus is rightly angry here because of the sins of the people. Sins in the temple where God was to be worshipped. This is the place the sins were to be left outside and pursuit of God was to be the action of everyone inside the gate.

James 1:19-20 (CSB)

My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, 20 for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

When you read about Jesus cleansing the temple, it seems out of character....it seems like an overreaction....you could even maybe think that Jesus was not quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.....

Mark 11:11 (CSB)

He went into Jerusalem and into the temple. After looking around at everything, since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Jesus checked out the temple the day before. Picture this scene.....everything we just read about, those buying and selling, the money changers, He saw all of this the day before.....He walked in and looked around at everything.....and left. It doesn't say that Jesus even said a word, pointed a finger, shook a fist, nothing....just left.

When we learn the character of God, it allows us to make some pretty safe assumptions sometimes....this is one of those times.....what do you think Jesus did when He left?

I would imagine He got away from everyone and prayed. I would imagine Him going to the Father and asking what should be done, what is right. Then He probably got some sleep, maybe woke up early and prayed some more....

Jesus did everything with intentionality. He is not an accident God. He does things on purpose, He has a reason.....and it's a righteous reason.

What led Him to this righteous anger toward the sins in the temple?

First we've got to have some kind of understanding of the temple layout.

- Court of the Gentiles - this is just inside the wall. This is where the non-Jews were allowed to worship. They were forbidden from going any further.
- Court of the Women - also the "Outer Court" - Jewish men and women were allowed here.
- Hall of Israelites - Only Jewish Men
- Hall of Priests - Only Priests
- Holy Place/Holy of Holies - Only the High Priest for sacrifices. This place was....holy

Jesus would have have most likely been in the outer 2 areas based on what we see Him do...the court of the Gentiles and the Outer Court

Mark 11:15-19 (CSB)

They came to Jerusalem, and he went into the temple and began to throw out those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves,

As people would travel to the temple to offer sacrifices to God, many of them had to travel a great distance. When they did this they didn't always bring their animals to be sacrificed because they could get injured or die and would be unacceptable for the sacrifice.

So what we have here is the locals would set up tables within the temple court and they would sell animals that would be acceptable to sacrifice.

What happens when you show up to places where they sell the goods that you need for their service. They gouge you on prices. They know you don't have what you need. They know they are the only ones selling it, it cost way more than it should.

On top of that, there was also a temple tax that had to be paid. And this could not be paid with just any currency, you had to pay it in the Jewish currency, shekels. So there were money changers, these nice people to help you out.

Have you ever been to a foreign country and had to exchange money? You don't even know what their different bills and coins are or you aren't sure how to compute the exchange rate, and you may even be unsure if what they gave you is right. Then you see what they charged just to swap money! It's like robbery!

Mark 11:16 (CSB)

and would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple.

The temple was HUGE. Don't think of this like our church. It was much, much bigger. Think of a university or large corporation, how they take up blocks and neighborhoods. People would regularly use the temple courts as a shortcut because they didn't want to go around.

This is what Jesus was cracking down on here. This is a place of worship, a place of prayer, you can't just cut through here carrying your Walmart and Aldi bags!

Mark 11:17 (CSB)

He was teaching them: "Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves!"

Here Jesus quotes a couple of OT passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah. This is something those in the temple courts would know very well!

This was a place of worship and devotion to the Lord but they had created an atmosphere of greed and self-promotion.

It had become a place of commerce, a place where the rich took advantage of the poor and needy. It was a den of thieves.

They were charging too much for the animals. Possibly even telling people that perfectly good animals they brought were blemished and wouldn't work "you need to buy one of these instead"

They were charging a high exchange rate, making a profit off of the people who came to worship.

They weren't just running a business, they weren't just providing a needed service. They were ripping people off "in the name of the Lord".

Jesus does not like that....and rightfully so. First and above all we worship. If we can't do anything else at least we worshipped.

And if you flash back to what Jesus saw that day before, sin in the outer courts.....but supposedly holiness in the inner courts where the priests were sacrificing, sprinkling blood, and burning incense.

Think about this.....can you have corruption in the Court of the Gentiles and in the Outer Court but holiness in the Holy Place?

Do you think it's possible that the priests were innocent and had no idea this was all going on?

Mark 11:18-19 (CSB)

The chief priests and the scribes heard it and started looking for a way to kill him. For they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was astonished by his teaching.

19 Whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.

The religious leaders are looking to kill Him!

I'll ask again....can you have corruption in the Court of the Gentiles and in the Outer Court but holiness in the Holy Place?

Jesus sees sin in the outer courts and it causes righteous indignation because He knows if there is sin in the outer courts, it's affecting the worship in the inner courts.

Jesus sees this and He flips the tables. He says enough is enough. Things have to change. This temple was built for something more. It was built for worship and prayer. It was built to glorify the One True God.

But you have made it a den of thieves. You are literally stealing from people and stealing from God.

This is how Jesus feels about the temple and when it's not right, He starts flipping tables and kicking people out.

This physical temple is no longer standing. Where is the Lord's temple today?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (CSB)

Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

Let's draw a comparison between what was happening at the Temple in Jerusalem and what happens with us as temples of the Holy Spirit.

When we allow sin in our outer courts, how does it affect the worship in the inner courts?

When we take this life, this body, one that was literally created to worship Jesus, to serve Him, to live for Him.....a heart that longs to worship Him.....

What happens when we allow sin to infiltrate our lives?

See we can't control what happens outside the gates, on the other side of the wall. That's the world. We live in a world where sin is paraded around like it's something good, if it's good for you, if you like it, it's ok.....we see greed and sensuality as these things that are paraded around our walls....

We can't control that. We can have an effect on it based on what we do, but we can't control it.

What we can control is what we allow INSIDE. What we allow in our homes. What we allow in our bodies.

We can flip tables and kick out whatever entices us to sin. We HAVE to flip tables once in a while because we get clogged up with vendors and money changers that pull us from worship of God to worship of self.

Hebrews 12:1 (CSB)

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us,

Lay what aside? EVERY Hindrance.....AND the sin that so easily ensnares us.....Lay it aside. You know where someone ends up when you flip their table and chair.....aside. They end up aside.

You know in John there is another account of cleansing the temple, some claim it's a separate instance, either way it's very similar in nature except Jesus makes a whip and drives them out.

Maybe you need a whip. Maybe you need to get a little violent today with whatever it is that causes sin in your outer courts and hinders your worship all the way to the inner courts.

So, we end up with two questions.

1) If Jesus came and looked at everything in your home, in your mind and in your soul what would He find? (Would you let Him or would you kill Him?)

2) In your heart you know what He would find. Will you let Him clean it out (He won't force you and you could just move it back in anyway.)

It's time to flip some tables.....come to the altar.