

Most of you will recognize the subject of today's passage. We are studying the cleansing of the temple. This is the second time the Bible records Christ taking issue with the way people were treating the temple. The first is very early in Christ's ministry (John 2:13-17). This second occurrence is recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This occurs during Passover week. That fact is significant because Jewish historians tell us that during Passover week Jerusalem was teeming with people. It was one of the "pilgrim feasts" those feasts that required Jewish males to come and worship in Jerusalem at the temple. Estimates vary, however, even the most conservative estimate say that perhaps 5 times the normal number of people would come to Jerusalem for Passover. Needless to say the city, and the temple, were overrun with worshippers. There are a couple of truths that we have to examine in regard to this temple cleansing.

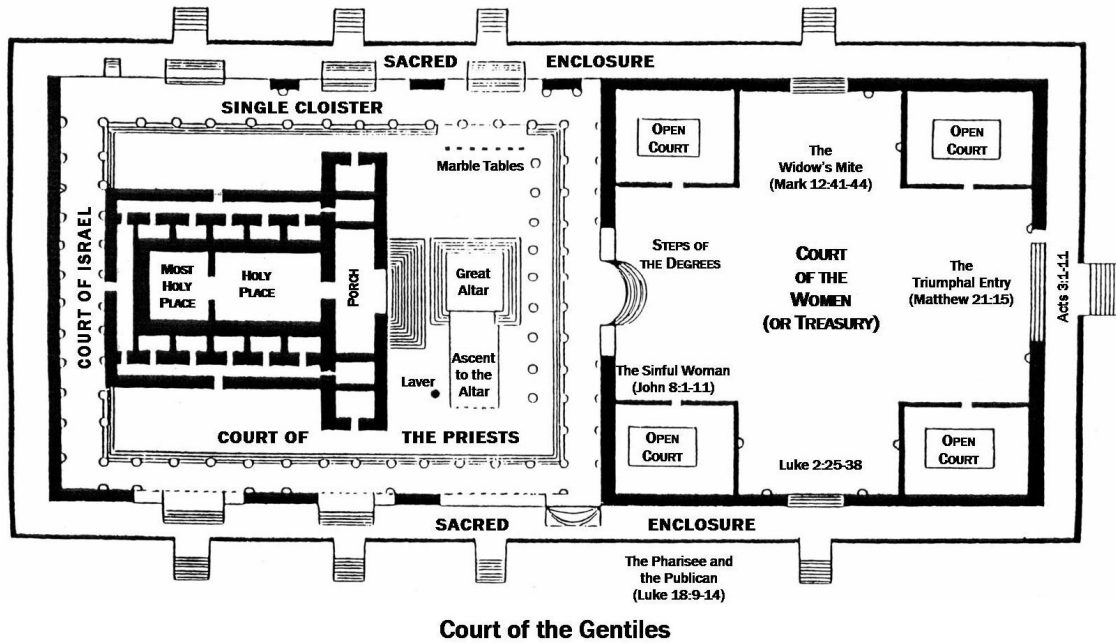
First, there is the shortcut truth. Mark records Jesus' actions concerning this in Mark 11:15-16. What does Mark record that Jesus did?

On the next page is a diagram which is available as a free download at www.thruthe bible.org. The top of this diagram would be the north and the area labeled "court of the Gentiles" actual surrounded the temple on all four sides. The most common way of entering the temple would be on the eastern side. The vast majority of worshippers coming into the temple would pass through the Eastern Gate. So if you are going to sell sacrificial animals for the worshippers to use in the worship of God you would need to sell them at the Eastern Gate. If you were in the business of selling animals for worship sacrifice this presented a logistical problem. The Sheep Gate, the entrance for all livestock was in the Northwestern wall of the city. That meant a long trek around the massive Temple complex to arrive at the Eastern gate. The other option was to cut through the temple complex itself. It would take you less time to get to the people and sell your animals. It was a shortcut to the worship ceremony or, a shortcut to God. What are some shortcuts that people attempt today to "get to God"?

What are some ways FBCM can alert people to the reality of the use of "shortcuts"?

Interior of Herod's Temple at Jerusalem

Court of the Gentiles



Court of the Gentiles

Jesus Cleanses the Temple
(Matthew 21:12, 13)

Shortcuts are real and can be easy substitutions for true worship. Mark records Jesus' words concerning this in Mark 11:15-16. What does Mark say Jesus did about the traders walking livestock through the temple complex?

In your mind's eye, what did Jesus do to stop the merchants?

There is a second truth that we must notice and that truth is addressed by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 21:13. What phrase does Jesus use to refer to the temple?

If you worship at FBCM that phrase is very familiar to you. Jesus is actually quoting Isaiah 56:6-7. Jesus is describing the Gentiles coming to the temple to worship and how they would be blessed by Him. In verse 6 of the Isaiah passage God lists 6 things that the Gentile would do who truly wanted to worship the Lord. List those 6 things here:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

We will discuss these 6 things in our session together.

Prayer Primer: Ask God if there are any “shortcuts” you use to worship Him and to prepare you for true worship.

Today we focus on one of the greatest attributes of God: compassion. It is the compassion of God that we see manifest in His grace and His mercy. Both grace and mercy are born out of God's passionate heart. These verses paint the true contrast between what God wants to do in someone's life and what man wants to do to each other, when man operates under the "old nature". Back when we studied Matthew 11 we saw that John the Baptist sent word to Jesus asking "are you the One?" Jesus' response was to tell John to examine what Jesus was doing: the blind were seeing and the lame were walking and the deaf were hearing. In other words, the compassion of God was being manifest in Jesus' ministry. In today's passage, Jesus was healing people and the things He was doing was amazing. What does your translation say the chief priests and the scribes saw Jesus doing in the temple that day?

The Greek word is *thaumasios* and it means marvels, miracles, amazing wonders. Jesus was healing and doing amazing acts of wonder. The children were amazed and were cheering the healing and the wonders. What is the word your translation uses to describe how the chief priest and scribes react to all of this?

The Greek word used there is the word *aganakteo*. The word means more than just indignation or displeasure. It means indignation that so offends someone that the person must take action against the offense. In other words the chief priests and scribes were so offended by the healing and the cheering that they felt they had to take action. The chief priests and scribes had indignation and Jesus had compassion. There is the foundational difference. Man will, when left to his own nature, act selfishly. God will act compassionately.

Compassion is also represented in the Old Testament by the word lovingkindness. I want to invite you to do a brief word study of these words compassion and lovingkindness. A great way to study God's word is to always keep a concordance handy and look up words and concepts when you come across them and see how the Bible deals with those words and concepts in other passages. Look up the following passages and make a list of the benefits we have as a result of God's compassion and lovingkindness. As you write each benefit make note of how each benefit has applied to your life. Try to make the application as specific as possible. For example, in one of the passages you will see one of the benefits we enjoy of God's compassion forgiveness of sin. What sin, specifically would you be thinking of? I realize that this is a highly personal exercise. Obviously, we will not ask you to share these sensitive things so feel free to write candidly.

Psalm 86:5

Exodus 34:6

Micah 7:18

Psalm 51:1-2 (in this passage there are 3 specific benefits listed, identify and personalize all 3)

Prayer Primer: Pray that your response to circumstances around you will be one of compassion like Jesus and not indignation like the chief priests and scribes.

Week 3, Day 13

Matthew 21:18-27

Today, we look at two events on the second day of Christ's ministry in Jerusalem on the last week of His life: one on the way into Jerusalem and one in the temple complex.

The first is on the road from Bethany to Jerusalem. Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree beside the road. What does verse 19 tell us that Jesus saw on the fig tree?

Jesus had every right to expect that there would be figs on this tree because there were leaves on the tree. Since the fig tree had produced leaves it should also be producing figs. Turn to and read Zechariah 3:9-10. The book of Zechariah was written in order to, among other things, encourage the people of Israel. The people of Israel were living in Jerusalem after the exile but the temple had not been rebuilt and enemies were everywhere. God tells the people through a series of visions to the prophet that He was in control and He was going to restore them to the temple. In verse 9 God tells the people He is going to take away their guilt and restore their fortunes as a nation. The prophet lists 2 specific possessions that each person would have in the future. List those 2 possessions here:

The people of Israel began to associate the fig tree with prosperity and blessing. In the account we are studying that is important to remember, because the Jewish hearers would have understood the symbolism. When the disciples saw the fig tree they would have known it should have figs. When the fig tree was barren the symbolism would have been clear to them. The nation appears to be prosperous in their religion but the religion is corrupt. It is no coincidence that this account of the barren fig tree falls in between two accounts that depict the barrenness of the Jews seemingly vibrant religious system.

We must understand the present-day application. The fig, for us, represents fruit. I want us to recall what we studied back in Matthew 7. In Matthew 7:16 Jesus makes a very plain statement about fruit. Paraphrase (write it in your own words) that verse here: