

Monday, April 3, 2023  
Season of Lent  
Day 35

### **Matthew 21:12-17**

<sup>12</sup> Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. <sup>13</sup> “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”

<sup>14</sup> The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup> But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

<sup>16</sup> “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,

“‘From the lips of children and infants  
you, Lord, have called forth your praise’?”

<sup>17</sup> And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

### **Reflection**

When Messiah comes, he will restore/cleanse the temple. This was a hope and expectation of some in Israel during the second temple period. It was not clear if God’s presence had returned with the rebuilding of the temple or the beautification of it done by Herod the Great. But, one of the ways the Messiah was to be known was through his relationship with the temple. So, naturally, when Jesus the Messiah comes to Jerusalem amid the shouts of his disciples and the city’s children, he goes directly to the temple. But he does something very surprising. He stops its activity.

Of course he only stops it for a moment, but it’s important to look at some of the details of what he is doing. First of all we tend to try to find fault with what is actually happening. But, what is happening is what is prescribed to happen: people who are traveling are purchasing sacrifices to make within the temple. Therefore, it is necessary to exchange money as people are traveling from different places. Maybe interest is being charged, but the text doesn’t tell us that. Instead, it is better to understand Jesus’s accusation to be more generally directed. Rather than robbers, we should read outlaws—insurrectionists. The temple has become a symbol and place of resistance to Roman rule rather than the place where God meets his people.

Strikingly though the presence of God has now arrived at the temple in the very person of Jesus. And, that presence begins to heal and cure. Rightly the children cry out Hosanna to the Son of David—that is what he has come for, to save. In this moment the temple has again become a house of prayer focused on the presence of God. But, then come the rulers who are indignant that Jesus would allow the claim of Messiah to be applied to him. After all he just disrupted the proceedings. With the ongoing blindness and constant rejection, the presence of God leaves the temple and goes out of the city fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel.

This is a good reminder that as the people of God we need to be careful not to define ourselves or our actions by what we are against. Rather, we are to define ourselves and act according to what we have been made; children of God in Christ. Our relationship with the presence of God in Christ is to be marked with prayer, not violence. Once again, our road to Jerusalem with the cross in view is the necessary Lenten journey to prepare us to receive this great salvation from God.

### **Prayer**

Lord, please forgive us for defining ourselves by our enemies, rather than by your presence. Help us to follow after your life, even as it leads us to our own cross. Amen.