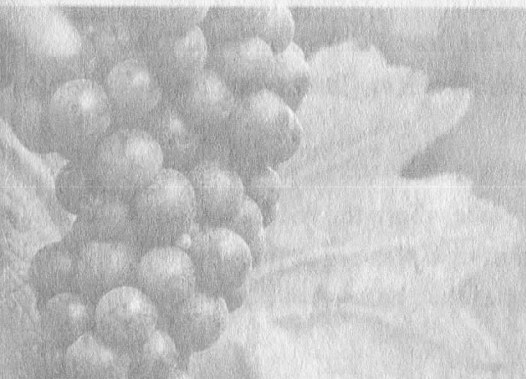


LESSON TEN

TRUE WORSHIP

When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

LUKE 19:45-46



REFLECTION

When celebrities arrive at a gala event, they are greeted with applause, red carpet treatment, and a dizzying barrage of camera flashes. On more formal occasions, the chaos is replaced with hushed tones and whispered comments. When someone important arrives on the scene, others pay attention. If Jesus were to visit your church, how do you think he would be greeted? Do you think he would feel comfortable? Would he be noticed?

SITUATION

Countless people were making their way into David's city, Jerusalem, for the yearly celebration of the Passover. In a symbolic gesture, Jesus rode a colt into town, re-enacting an ancient tradition of a king coming in peace. He was greeted with praise and palm branches, but as he approached the city he wept over it, for he knew the people would ultimately reject him.

OBSERVATION

Read Luke 19:37–48 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

⁴⁰ “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

⁴⁵ When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. ⁴⁶ “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be a house of prayer’; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

⁴⁷ Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. ⁴⁸ Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

³⁷ Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, ³⁸ saying:

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

⁴⁰ But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”

⁴¹ Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

⁴⁵ Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, ⁴⁶ saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

⁴⁷ And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, ⁴⁸ and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

EXPLORATION

1. Why did the people celebrate Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem?

2. How did the Pharisees react to the crowds? How did Jesus respond to them?

3. Why did Jesus weep when he saw Jerusalem, while all the people were praising him?

4. Why did Jesus not tolerate the buying and selling in the temple?

5. Jesus called the temple "a house of prayer." How well does that describe our churches today?

6. What message did Jesus send to church leaders when he cleared the temple?

INSPIRATION

It's a sad but true fact of the faith: religion is used for profit and prestige. When it is, there are two results: people are exploited and God is infuriated. There's no better example of this than what happened at the temple.... What did Jesus see? Hucksters. Faith peddlers. People in the temple making a franchise out of the faith.

It was Passover week. The Passover was the highlight of the Jewish calendar. People came from all regions and many countries to be present for the celebration. Upon arriving they were obligated to meet two requirements. First, an animal sacrifice, usually a dove. The dove had to be perfect, without blemish. . . . So, under the guise of keeping the sacrifice pure, the dove sellers sold doves—at their price. Second, the people had to pay a temple tax . . . in local currency.

Knowing many foreigners would be in Jerusalem to pay the tax, money changers conveniently set up tables and offered to exchange the foreign money for local— for a modest fee, of course.

It's not difficult to see what angered Jesus. Pilgrims journeyed days to see God, to witness the holy, to worship His Majesty. But before they were taken into the presence of God, they were taken to the cleaners. . . .

“I've had enough,” was written all over the Messiah's face. In he stormed. Doves flapped and tables flew. People scampered and traders scattered. This was not an impulsive show. This was not a temper tantrum. It was a deliberate act with an intentional message . . . Knowing his days were drawing to a close, he chose to make a point: God will never hold guiltless those who exploit the privilege of worship. (From *And the Angels Were Silent* by Max Lucado.)

REACTION

7. How would you define true worship of God?

8. What are some things that can interfere with your worship?

9. How can you determine whether your motives are pure when you go to church?

10. What are some ways people misuse religion for their own purposes?

11. What responsibility do you have to eliminate inappropriate activities and behavior from the church?

12. What steps can believers take to protect the church from exploitation?

LIFE LESSONS

Worship takes on a different tone when we stop long enough to remember that Jesus sees more than external actions. Our attempts at going through the motions may impress others and satisfy our own ideas of what “minimum worship requirements” involves, but God sees our hearts, our intentions, and the flow of our thoughts. Although much attention is given to worship styles—contemporary versus traditional, spontaneous versus liturgical—these concerns pale before the ultimate issue of what God witnesses when we worship. We have God's attention when we enter worship. What will we do with it?

