

There is a story in Jesus' life that seems a bit odd and out of place. It does not seem to fit our image of his personality and temperament. I've never seen it painted in a classic painting or hanging on a wall. But God thought this story was important enough to include it in the Bible twice.

Mark 11:15-18

- 15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves,**
- 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.**
- 17 And as he taught them, he said, “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.’”**
- 18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.**

Jesus doesn't appear to be the Jesus we would expect to see. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. The gentle, loving Jesus; meek and mild. The Good Shephard, that lovingly throws a lost sheep over his shoulders and carries it to safety. Here, Jesus seems mad!

But this is not the first time. The first time was a couple of years earlier...

John 2:13-17

- 13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**
- 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.**
- 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.**
- 16 To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!”**
- 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”**

This time Jesus had actually made a whip out of cords and drove them out with it!

Just Doing Their Job

The interesting thing is that the people Jesus drove out were actually supposed to be there. They were doing their job.

- According to the Levitical law, the people had to bring animals to the temple for sacrifices. It was often too much to travel with the animals, so they could be purchased at the temple. But there was some price gouging going on. They had to pay way too much to worship God.
- A temple tax was required, but the people couldn't use their Greek or Roman coins, they needed the money changers to exchange their coins for special temple coins that were minted in Jerusalem. And of course, the money changers tacked on a hardy fee for their services.
- All this stuff had to be brought into the temple, but rather than bringing it in properly, they were dragging through the Gentile Courts and right through the temple. They were taking a short cut to quickly make some big-time bucks.
- The workers were in the Temple physically, but they were not in the “Spirit” of the temple.

Our Challenge One: The Father's House Must Be Conducted the Father's Way

This story begs a question for us all to ask ourselves. The question isn't just, “Are you doing God's work?”, but “How are you doing God's work?”. In what spirit are you doing what you do?

When we as God's people are doing our jobs, doing what we are supposed to do, we need to ask ourselves, "Why I am doing what I do?"

- As I pastor Believers Church, I have to ask myself why I do it and what spirit am I doing in? One day you and I will stand before the judgement seat of Christ and give an account of what you did and why you did it.

In the church world today, we all need to stop and ask ourselves, "Why am I doing what I'm doing and in what spirit am I doing it?"

Singing on the praise team, choir, band, teacher, Life Group leaders, Guest Services, Security, serving the Boro, anything that we are supposed to be doing.

EX: A young man at mega church resigned because the new administrative pastor ran the church like a major company or organization, rather than the "living organism", which it is- the body of Christ.

Jesus said, this is my Father's House. Therefore, the Father's House must be conducted the Father's way. Jesus is saying that if you do something sacred in a secular way, "I'm going to clear you out of here!"

It's not just about what you do, but it's how and why you do it that pleases the Father.

- As we do good works, we are not to rob God of the glory that's due to Him.
- Everything we do should glorify and honor Jesus and the Father.

The people in the temple didn't understand about "My Father's House". They acted like it was theirs and for their profit and gain.

Bold Next Step: Today, I will consider why I do what I do and how I do it.

Challenge Two: The Father's House Must Be a House of Prayer

Mark 11:17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But rather than it being a house of prayer... "you have made it 'a den of robbers'". The temple of God should have the atmosphere or the aroma of prayer and intercession.

Note: Our buildings are not the temple. There is no brazen altar for sacrifices in our church building. We are the temple of God! The church collectively and us as individuals now house the Spirit of the living God, the Holy Spirit within us.

Our Bodies are the temple or house of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Collectively as a local church when we gather together, full of the Holy Spirit, the Church is the temple or house of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

In Ephesians, the temple or house of God is also the church universally.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We are the temple. The problem is sometimes Christians don't always have an aroma of prayer in their lives.

In the temple, the Father's House.

- Preaching yes. Music yes. But it should be called a house of prayer.

Bold Next Step: Today, I will ask myself if my temple is a house of prayer?

A House of Prayer is where prayer is what we always turn to, what we depend on.

- In Acts 2, what were the people doing when the Holy Spirit baptized them with power? They were praying and from that prayer meeting the early church surged forward enabled to do what God called them to do.
- In Acts 4, when Peter and John were jailed, released, and told to keep quiet about Jesus- what did the church do? Turn political, protest, petition the government? No, they prayed! They called a prayer meeting!
- When in trouble- the church prayed. Intimidated- they prayed. Persecuted- they prayed. We need to repent of all the times we have not thought about praying.
- In Acts 9, after Saul's Road to Damascus conversion experience, God told Ananias to go to Saul, lay hands on him and pray for him, and he would be healed and shown what he would do for God. But what made Ananias know that it was ok to go to a man that a day earlier may have killed him? His assurance was Jesus' words. **Acts 9:11-12 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."** Prayer was the assurance that Saul was now a follower of Jesus.
- When the Apostle Paul was teaching the young Pastor Timothy, what did he tell him was of first importance? **1 Timothy 2:1-4 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**
- Paul told Timothy that he wanted the church to be a people of prayer. **1 Timothy 2:8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.**
- In **Revelation 5:8** we get a peek into heaven and what do we see the twenty-four elders holding in their hands as they fall be the Lamb? **...Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.**
- How did the early church continue to do the works of Jesus on this earth? **Acts 2:42-43. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.**
- Throughout history, all the great revivals were birthed out of prayer. Moody's revivals, Finney's revivals, the Great Awaken, The Pioneer revival, the Welch Revival, and the Azusa Street revival were all born out of prayer meetings. God's people gathering to pray. Eventually people stopped praying and the revivals ended.
- We the Church must learn to be houses of prayer.
- Parents must teach their children to pray.
- We need to teach those who God sends to us to pray.

If we will make ourselves and our church corporately a house of prayer, we will see an increase in salvations, baptisms, healings, unity, deliverance, family restorations, and more.

Preaching and teaching alone won't do it. Knowledge won't do it. We need to be people of prayer.

- Thousands of marriage books and teachings, but the divorce rate is increasing.
 - Couples need to learn to pray together.
- Thousands of family and child raising books, but family troubles continue.
 - You need to be praying together as a family.

What do we do when we are in trouble?

- Knowledge is good, teaching is good, singing is good, but first and foremost we bring it to the Lord in prayer.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

NLT So let us come boldly (Bold Prayer) to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

James 4:2 says we have not because we ask not. We could stop here and pose theological answers to why else we may not have? We could, but let's not miss this truth that first and foremost we ask!

Prayer is the conduit for all the blessing of God to flow.

Prayer is walking up to the table of Jesus and tasting to see that the Lord is good.