

The House Jesus Loves

Following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus does, says, and experiences some remarkable things as a result of His love for us. These things are recorded in Mark's gospel account:

Mark 11:12-19

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. **13** And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. **14** And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. **16** And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. **17** And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." **18** And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. **19** And when evening came they went out of the city.

Let's make some important observations.

1. Jesus judges His Church (vv. 12-16)

Jesus, in Old Testament tradition, performs two vivid prophetic judgments. He curses the fig tree because "he found nothing but leaves," and He cleanses the Temple because the religious leaders had made an animal market out of the outer courts. With us, too, He judges and disciplines, and we must always carefully submit to His correction when we go astray. Sometimes we displease Him because we are not bearing fruit, and sometimes we provoke Him because we have turned Church into an entertainment center.

2. Jesus teaches His Church (v. 17)

Jesus not only corrects us but also directs and encourages us. In this teaching, we learn these things:

A. This is His house, not ours. He says, "My house..." All we do here is not for our enjoyment, but for His. Our pleasure comes from bringing Him pleasure.

B. Our main task is to pray, not play. He says, "My house shall be called a house of prayer..." As someone once said, our problem is that we worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship. God wants us to be praying people, praying families, and a praying church (Participation in Second Week is important!)

C. We must include all people in our family. He says, "...a house of prayer for all people." Tragically, the high priest of Israel had set up the money changers in the Court of the Gentiles, where people from all over the world could come to hear about the God of Israel. The Church had, by their self-centeredness, obstructed the way of the Gentiles to the light of the gospel. Jesus was furious.

3. Jesus dies for His Church (vv. 18,19)

Although the people at large were fascinated and amazed by Jesus' authoritative teaching, the religious leaders hated Him for it. It was this hatred that eventually arrested, tortured, and killed Him. The very words of judgment that we deserved fell upon Him when He died on Calvary's cross. He loved us to the end; thus we love Him with all our hearts.

Discussion Questions

1. How can Jesus “judge the Church” since we know that He has already died for all our sins? (Take a look at I Peter 4:17; James 5:9; Isaiah 6:9-13; Romans 9:6-8; 11:17-24.)
2. In view of Jesus’ prophetic judgments, how ought the American Church respond?
3. How do we as church members sometimes act as though this is our church, rather than His?
4. How can we as individuals, families, and a church become a “house of prayer for all the nations?”
5. Why did the religious leaders have such enmity toward the Messiah? Why do some people today have similar feelings? How should we react to this?

Going Deeper

1. Develop your own plan for prayer and for worship, privately and publicly, for the next year. What changes do you want to make from last year?
2. If you were as passionate about the church as Jesus is, how would your attitudes and actions change regarding the church?