**“Significant Action—Monday of Holy Week”**

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Mark 11:15-19

Lenten Midweek 2

In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You and I (like many Christians) are probably familiar with the details of the major events that took place on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. But what took place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week? **Those three days** contain some of Jesus’ **also** most significant actions, most significant teaching, and most significant confrontations with those who were supposed to lead the people of that time. Beginning today and continuing-on throughout the rest of the midweek Lenten services, we’ll explore the three significant days **between** Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday.

Today’s text took place on **Monday** of Holy Week. On the previous day (Palm Sunday) Jesus entered Jerusalem with enthusiasm and shouts of, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” with Palm Sunday ending on the note that “He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve”.

That was an ominous cliff hanger because the next day (Monday of Holy Week) Jesus is recording doing a good bit more than looking around the temple grounds. He’d become disgusted with what he saw, so

**CAME BACK AND TOOK ACTION … SIGNIFICANT ACTION.**

**I**

As Mark records it, Jesus (quote) “began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons”. Fulfilling what got spoken of Him in the prophet Isaiah, chapter 56, verse 7, Jesus said: “My house **shall be** called a house **of prayer** for all the nations”.

He was **angry about what men had made of it** … and it wasn’t the way we’re used to seeing Jesus. It’s definitely not the meek and mild Jesus (shown here) that we sang about at Christmas. He’d grown up to work … and **the Father’s work (cleansing) is not always pretty**.

So what’s happening in our text? Well, every Passover (celebrated rhythmically by God’s people to remember His delivery of them from bondage (there’s in Egypt), all were to come to Jerusalem and the Temple to gather and together remember. Many came from way far away and it was easier for them to **buy** the sacrificial animals they needed close to the temple. The effort of bringing animals over long distances created a **market**. For **convenience sake**, priests arranged to market a preapproved animal marketplace for travelers to purchase and, technically (but not quite), meet the Laws’ demand for “first-fruit” sacrifice. These market-purchased animals got sold at a premium (hassle-free) price. There were reports of kickbacks to the priests and priests favoring vendors by rejecting animals purchased at places other than the official sellers. What was to be a **shaping experience for the hearts of God’s people** became a **racket**.

Travelers also came to Jerusalem with foreign currencies, and those had to exchanged for currencies acceptable to pay a temple tax. And, as you might expect, money-changers charged exorbitant exchange fees … with kickbacks on **that racket** as well. The focus was (by a longshot) not **God’s grace and prayer and a first-fruit sacrifice from His (always) first-fruit efforts and sacrifice**. Focus became on **“business” in the temple**. And Passover time was the **time of profit**.

But there was something **still more egregious happening**. The temple was to be a “house of prayer **for all the nations**.” It was to be a house of prayer not just for Jews, but **for Gentiles as well**. The temple had been constructed for **everyone in good order**. There was a court for male Jews, one for female Jews, and one for Gentiles learning the covenant. With some of the temple’s courts of prayer converted to marketplaces, the Gentiles (“nations”) lost some of their place they were to join in prayer and worship. The temple had become not only a money-making enterprise, but one not encouraging the hospitality of evangelism … not **welcoming and gathering** … only **greedy** and **self**-serving.

**That’s** **why** Jesus launched into significant action on the Monday of Holy Week (clearing the temple and its grounds and activities).

**II**

A that Monday’s significant action on the part of Jesus sends a message to you and to me. **We, too**, can be tempted to turn the **practice of the Christian faith** into a means to provide us just secular pleasure … to budget our investment God’s way in some way that promotes us patting ourselves on the backs rather than changing us for God. It’s easy, even for us, to get budgeting our time and talents and financial-giving-percentages, losing sight of the reason we’re supposed to be doing all we’re supposed to be doing as God’s Church. Do we pull in or even view every new person as belonging here / expected, like us (every one), needing fed God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament?

The money-changers and vendors who made God’s House a transactional marketplace made an obstacle for themselves and all people. The worship of God became (in a terrible sense) another opportunity to worship ourselves. What, really, stands in the way of worshiping God in your life? Are any of those self-inflicted in attitude or habit? Are there any placed as obstacles by someone else, perhaps family? Or are you placing obstacles in the lives of others who seek to worship?

**III**

Jesus would like nothing more than to take significant action in overturning and driving those obstacles from your life so that you might receive from Him all that’s His good gifts of Word and Sacrament, and every Good gift of growth and wisdom and strength from Him. “**Fasting during Lent**” is an exercise to let Christ **cleanse away** your obstacles so as to return to the prayer and worship of God.

It was His significant action on the Monday of that most Holy Week to **cleanse**, but even that was just **pre-cursor to the significant action that He would take for you and for all people at the end of that week**. Then, it wouldn’t vendors and animals driven from the temple court, but sin, death, and the devil from their places of rule and dominance over the lives of people. He drove out (upon a cross) what separated humanity from God, namely, sin un-paid for.

And all that the Christ had accomplished became yours on His wonderful **day of God’s significant action in your life, Baptism**. On that day, the blood sacrifice of the cross became for you and your benefit, the Holy Spirit working through the Word and water, calling you to faith, washing away all your sin, claiming you as God’s child with His name (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and making you, then, an heir of everlasting life.

As you might expect, the religious leaders of the day were not pleased with the action Jesus took on Monday of Holy Week. That was definitely **not good for business** (Mark even records the chief priests and scribes seeking a way to destroy Jesus in a fast way from then). It was a progressive week of significant activity … and the actions of God for mankind. Stay tune as we continue to explore what happened on also the front-end “Three Significant Days” of Holy Week. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.