



## “Jesus Cleans House”

Luke 19:45 – 20:8

March 1, 2020

Good morning everybody. It is good to be together. I welcome you once again to this gathering of Bethel Grace. And I welcome you to our continued study of the Gospel of Luke. This morning’s message is titled *Jesus Cleans House*.

This is not going to be a message that is aimed to motivate you to get a head start on your spring cleaning, which I understand may be beginning this time of year. We are not quite in spring yet, but it is coming soon. No, this is not going to be a message to inspire the need to make the bed every morning, and to wash the dishes every evening, and to vacuum, and to do all the things that make for a tidy environment to live in, though doing those things with a servant’s heart is definitely a good thing.

Rather, this is a message about an amazing display of the authority of the Lord Jesus, of King Jesus, when He entered the precincts of the Jerusalem temple and cleansed it of corrupt financial practices that were taking place on the temple courts.

This message is a reminder for all of us that Christ comes into our lives with the same authority and the same desire to cleanse His people of any practices that are ungodly, that are unworthy, that somehow pollute the Christian life. Jesus wants to cleanse us of such things.

This morning’s portion of Scripture takes us into Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, where so many were gathering to worship the Lord and make sacrifices to the Lord.

I wonder how many of you know the frustrating experience of going to some venue, maybe a concert or a theme park or some kind of professional sporting facility, and they do not allow you to bring food onto the premises. You can’t bring your own nourishment when you go in, so you have to buy what they provide if you want to eat. You have to buy it at whatever price they sell it for. It can be frustrating to get a mediocre cheeseburger, mediocre French fries, and a soft drink that does not even include free refills, yet you must pay an astronomical price for it. You get frustrated about. You don’t like it but if you want to eat, you can’t do anything about it. You have no choice.

But you might expect such a thing at a place of business. In this account of what happened in the Gospel of Luke, we are at the Jerusalem temple. We are there at a place of worship. We are there at the festival of the Passover, where people from all throughout Israel were gathering to celebrate how the Lord delivered them from bondage in Egypt and how they were going to offer sacrificial lambs of their own, recognizing the fact that they too were sinners, that they too should die for their sins. But God was pleased with these sacrifices to forgive them and be reconciled to them.

These people were going in and could not bring sacrificial lambs of their own, because they were walking miles upon miles upon miles to get to Jerusalem in the first place. If they had FITBIT Watches, each day they would be registering twenty to thirty thousand steps—ten to fifteen miles a day.

When they were walking in caravans and seeking to help some of the older folks, and seeking to keep track of the little ones, it became very difficult to bring their own lambs, pigeons, extra flour, and extra oil, and extra wine for the different sacrifices that might take place.

So when they arrived, they would buy those provisions in Jerusalem. There were vendors all through the temple courts. The vendors were authorized by the religious leaders to sell. But the vendors were doing something that we call *price gouging*. In other words, they were ripping people off. In other words, they were sucking people dry. They were taking advantage of people.

Jesus came into the temple precincts and he saw what was happening. He understood what was happening. He saw the evil of what was happening, and Jesus, brothers and sisters, cleaned house. He came in and He began tossing tables. He began to clear inventory. As Jesus drove all the people out of the temple who were taking advantage of the worshipers, then He replaced what they were doing and began teaching them the truths of His Kingdom. It is an amazing picture that is before us.

As we dig into what is laid before us as Luke presented it for us, what we find is that the event of the cleansing of the temple is given to us so very briefly. Luke described what happened just in a single sentence that is contained with two verses.

It was an awesome thing that took place, but Luke was very brief in his account of it. What he focused on was the aftermath. What Luke focused on was that the temple authorities came up to Jesus and they asked, *What authority do you have? Who do you think you are?*

So it was a question of authority that is laid before us here in this portion of Scripture. It is a question that rings forth into the ages and into Southern California and into a place called Bellflower, where each person who gathers to know the Lord needs to think about very carefully. Who is the authority of my life? Who is the authority of my temple? Who is the one who is in charge?

These are questions for us to grapple with, but let's just start by reading the account of what went down as Luke laid it out before us in Luke Chapter 19, starting in Verse 45 and all the way through Luke Chapter 20 and Verse 8:

**<sup>45</sup>And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, <sup>46</sup>saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."**

<sup>47</sup>And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, <sup>48</sup>but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

**2**One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up <sup>2</sup>and said to him, “Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.”

<sup>3</sup>He answered them, “I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, <sup>4</sup>was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? <sup>5</sup>And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ <sup>6</sup>But if we say, ‘From man’, all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.” <sup>7</sup>So they answered that they did not know where it came from. <sup>8</sup>and Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

So we read here in the Gospel of Luke that King Jesus continued to take the city of Jerusalem by storm. It started in what we studied last week as Jesus orchestrated the entire event of the triumphal entry, getting the colt and deliberately presenting Himself in fulfillment of prophecy as the Messiah to the praises of His disciples, and expanding to a number of people that were gathered there.

Jesus was there receiving praise. After that, the next day, Jesus entered into the temple with righteous indignation. He began tossing tables and letting the animals loose, probably telling people to just take the animals. I don't know what happened to them after that. People needed sacrifices, maybe Jesus told them to take them. I am musing here!

Jesus was doing this, then the temple authorities, the members of the Sanhedrin came to Him. Their basic question was, *Who in the Sam Hill do you think you are? Young man, who do you think you are doing all these things? What authority do you have? Who authorized this? Was it Annas or Caiaphas? Why do you think that you can come in here and do the things that you are doing?*

So they questioned the authority of Jesus. Then Jesus replied with great wisdom and He answered with a question of His own that would have led them to the answer they were seeking if they were sincerely seeking the answer. Jesus took them to the baptism of John—John the Baptist—clearly a prophet sent to Israel from God.

John the Baptist, like Christ after Him, upset and challenged the position of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, so they did not like John the Baptist, but everybody could see that he was a prophet sent to them from God. John the Baptist came as the forerunner to the Messiah and he, himself, identified Christ as the One.

Furthermore, it was at the very baptism of Jesus that the heavens were opened with the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, resting upon Christ to empower His ministry. Then the Voice was heard from heaven, *This is My Son. With Him I am well pleased. My Son whom I love.*

Christ was taking them to that event where the answer to their question was found. He came with full Messianic authority from prophecy and from God. But they were not interested in getting the answer. They were trying to tie Jesus up and get Him to say something that they could use against Him. They said they did not know the answer. Jesus knew their abusive intent, and so He backed off and He said no more.

The whole question that permeates and dominates this portion of Scripture is the lordship of Christ. The lordship of Jesus to come and cleanse temples. The lordship of Jesus to also come as authority into the lives of people, as King and as Messiah.

This week I was reminded of a certain exchange between a certain dad and his five-year-old son. On a lazy Saturday morning, the time came where it was time to step up and get going and get some things done. So the dad went into the bedroom and said, *Son, we have some things we need to get done today. I need for you to get dressed so we can go out and do a few things.* The dad left the room and went back about five minutes later, and his boy was doing the same thing that he was doing before. So the dad said, *Son, I just told you that it is time to get dressed, so we can go.* He left his son again.

The dad went back yet again to his son's room a few minutes later and there was the boy doing the same thing, not doing what his dad had told him to do to start getting dressed. The dad then said, *Son, I am telling you it is time to get dressed. Put on your clothes now.* The boy asked his dad why should he. The father told his son, *Because I am your father and I have told you and that is what you are going to do.* To which the son responded, *You are not the Lord.* Would a child actually ever say that to his father in real life? I don't know. I won't say! Then that father went on to explain, *That is so true. I am not the Lord, but the Lord has delegated to me authority and by that authority, you are to do what I ask you to do.*

But here in this portion of Scripture these temple officials were going to Jesus saying, *You are not the Lord. We are not even sure you come from the Lord.* It was a spirit of defiance. They were resisting the Lord Jesus Christ, as we see this laid out before us.

We are those who are gathered together in Jesus' Name. We are those who have gathered as the church. We are those who have come recognizing Christ as the King and recognizing ourselves as those fallen in sin, needing redemption just like everybody else on this earth.

We come praising Jesus that He is our Savior and we come under His lordship. The fact that He is Lord, is saying that He is the highest authority and that there is no one equal to Jesus. There is no one above Jesus. When Jesus says something, we believe it. When He commands something, by the grace of God, by the work of the Spirit in us, we carry it out. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is authority.

I want to spend the moments ahead of us recognizing three ways in this passage that Jesus asserted His authority. I pray that we see it. I pray that we rejoice in it. I pray that we fall in line with it, and that we, with all our hearts, can declare Christ is Lord of this place and in each life.

How does Jesus asserted His authority in this portion of Scripture? Frist,

### **1. Jesus Gives Instruction (Luke 19:46, 47, 20:1)**

Jesus asserts His authority by giving instruction. Did you notice that all throughout this portion of Scripture, we find Christ teaching and preaching. We see it in Verse 47 after Jesus cleared the temple. It says that He was teaching daily in the temple. Then in Chapter 20 and Verse 1, it says that He was teaching the people in the temple, that He was preaching the Gospel.

Even as we look at the actual event of the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was so filled with the Word of God that He quoted Scripture as He drove them out. He quoted the prophet Isaiah—it is written, my house is to be a house of prayer. Then Jesus quoted Jeremiah—but you have made it a den of thieves, a den of robbers.

Brothers and sisters, the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Lord, He came into the world preaching and He came teaching. This is absolutely core to Christian ministry. Jesus was a teacher and Jesus was a preacher. The Word of God, the Word of Christ, is at the heart and soul of any church that belongs to Him.

As a gathering of believers, by the work of the Spirit in us, we love, believe in, and want to honor Jesus. That is why we hold the ministries of teaching and preaching incredibly high. That is why when we gather together on a Sunday morning like this, the teaching and preaching of God's Word is the centerpiece.

That is why when we gather at a time like this, we lift up the truths of God from the pages of Scripture to song and melody, singing back to God the truths that He has given us in the Word. That is why we come together throughout the week, gathering in homes to continue to discuss the Word of God and its application to our lives.

Jesus came teaching and preaching, and teaching and preaching is at the heart of all Christian ministry. It is at the heart of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, understand that we are designed for this. As human beings, we are made to receive instruction from God.

This goes all the way back to the book of Genesis and Chapter 1, with a need for God's Word and His instruction in the very basic design of what it is to be a human being. We did not start needing the Word of God after we fell into sin. His instruction did not begin in Genesis Chapter 3.

You go back to Genesis Chapter 1, God created the man and the woman. The first thing He did after creating, it says that God blessed them and then what did He do after that? God spoke to them. He instructed them. He told them what they were to do—fill the earth and subdue it. He gave them instructions. And so it is through every age.

The people of God are those who sit under the Word of God, who sit under the instruction of God, recognizing that He is the authority of our lives. By the Spirit, we joyfully submit to the authority of King Jesus.

Here in this passage of Scripture, we also have two phrases that I think sum up and characterize the distinction between teaching and preaching. There is so much overlap, but there is a bit of a distinction between the two.

In teaching, what you have is the instruction of God that is there to clarify the content and meaning of Scripture. Content and meaning. Then preaching is instruction from God's Word that calls for obedience to Scripture.

In this passage there are two phrases that summarize both. In Verse 46, notice that little phrase *it is written*. That is teaching. What is written? Help us understand what is written. Then later in the same verse, there is another little two-word phrase that characterizes preaching, and that is *but you*.

It is written, teaching. But you, preaching! That starts getting in our laps. It starts stepping on our feet. It starts telling us to repent and live life according to God's Word. It is written is teaching. Don't gossip. Don't use language that is unwholesome in that it ultimately tears other people down. Don't gossip. What is gossip? Gossip is talking behind people's back, saying things in a private place that you would never say in front of them. Gossip! That is teaching.

Preaching gets up in our faces and says, *Why do you talk so much behind people's back? Why do you cut people down behind their backs? Why do you talk about people in a way that is not uplifting, and you would never say in front of them?*

Repent! Do not gossip. Don't gossip. It tears down the church. Control your tongue. Oh no, no man can control the tongue, according to James. Praise God, in the fullness of the Spirit, the tongue can be tamed.

It points us back to the grace of God in helping us to carry out first the need to confess that we are sinners who disobey the Word of God. Then grace comes from God to receive that cleansing work from Jesus, then seeks to live in the way that He calls us to live.

I think that we are a church that likes teaching, getting into the context of Scripture. But do you like preaching, both at the pulpit level and at the personal level where we admonish one another, saying that we are not living up to Scripture in a certain area. Here in what we have in the example of Jesus, there is both teaching and preaching. Those are vital for us to be all that the Lord wants us to be.

How did Jesus assert authority? Jesus gave instruction. That is one way we see it throughout this portion of Scripture. There is a second way that Jesus asserted authority:

## 2. Jesus Withholds Knowledge (Luke 20:1-8)

Jesus withholds answers from certain people. Did you see it in the text? That is what happened in Luke Chapter 20 and Verses 1 through 8. But didn't we just talk about the fact that Jesus gives information and instructs? Yes! He does, praise God for that.

However, there examples of those who become so defiant and so hardened in heart and so abusive in their intent that Jesus will conceal from them. We see it happening here in this account of Jesus and His interaction with the chief priests and the Scribes and all the principle people.

Even after three years of filling the land with miraculous power and teaching from the Spirit of God, Jesus came in and presented Himself with messianic authority and those members of the Sanhedrin, who knew full well all that Christ was doing, they asked Him, *Who do you think you are and by what authority are you doing these things.*

They had received so much light already. Then they came with foul intent, demanding answers from Jesus and He answered them in such a way that it could lead to the information they wanted if they were sincere about it. But they were not, so Jesus ended the conversation by saying, *Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.* Jesus was not going to say again what had already been made clear all throughout His ministry.

So there were cases where Jesus withheld information in judgment upon people who persevere in hardness of heart. Ready for this one? My understanding is that there may be times in our lives when Jesus calls for us to do the same. This is kind of difficult to believe, isn't it?

Understand this first and foremost: We are to be humble, gracious witnesses for Jesus in this world that we live in. There needs to be a heart within us that in our sphere of influenced lives, that people hear about Jesus and they come to know Him and that we pray that they will come into a relationship with Jesus. There is an ongoing desire that people come to know the Lord.

We are called to be witnesses in our spheres of influence. However, what we may find if we are faithful in sharing our faith and the Gospel with people, there may be some that respond abusively and with scorn and mockery and they do it again and again and again. There may come a time where the Word of Jesus to us is to back off.

Maybe some more familiar language for many of us will confirm what we are talking about. Here is what Jesus said in Matthew 7:6

***“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.***

That was what was happening there with Jesus and the members of the Sanhedrin. Perhaps some of us are more familiar with how it is put in the King James Version:

**“Don't cast your pearls before the swine.” KJV**

When we are seeking with honesty and humbleness of heart to share our faith and people come back and begin pressing down on us with persecution, it is just like these Pharisees. They were looking to trap Jesus and find a way to kill Him, and it came to the point where He said, *I am not going to cast pearls before the swine.*

The Lord may bring us to a place as we have been seeking to witness with people that with their ongoing scorn of the things of the faith, that we just back off. That is what Jesus was doing and modeling in this passage. When we share our faith, there may come those times.

Understand this: most people that we encounter in this world are going to be perfectly reasonable. But there are some who become hostile. There are some who just want to do us damage. We don't stop praying for them. We don't stop going to the Lord asking that He would change their hearts, but there may come that time when we stop enduring what they are throwing at us.

I think that is what Jesus was saying here in The Sermon on the Mount. We see it put on display for us as He interacted with the Sanhedrin. That was another display of the authority of Jesus here in this text.

One last way that Jesus asserted His authority. How did Jesus assert His authority:

### **3. Jesus Cleanses Temples (I Cor. 3:16-17; 6:18-20)**

Jesus cleansed temples in one way back then, and He continues to do it other ways even into the present day. It is very interesting because a couple times earlier in the Gospel of Luke, and He did it again, Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem because of their ongoing hardness of heart toward the Messiah and their persecution of the people of God. Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, including its temple and what we find is that in AD70, that is exactly what happened when Emperor Titus came in.

But what we find throughout the pages of the New Testament is that there was the language that spoke of the ongoing presence of the temple of God on this earth in the age that we are living in, even though that temple Jesus was talking about then is long gone.

Yet, the temple of the Lord remains. And Jesus still has authority and the desire to keep His temple clean by His grace. We see this twice in the book of I Corinthians. Once it speaks of the church as a gathering in plural form. The local church being the temple of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 3:16-17

**<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?**

**<sup>17</sup>If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.**

In the context of 1 Corinthians, Jesus wants to keep His temple cleansed of false teaching. I Corinthians talks about the temple, the church being harmed from within by those of puffed-up character, who teach things that are not true. That person will face the judgment of God. That is what this text tells us.

There is instruction to the church corporately but then continuing on in I Corinthians, we find that it starts talking about individual Christians being the temple of the Holy Spirit. In I Corinthians 6:18-20, Paul really had to emphasize this in Corinth which was like the First Century equivalent of New York City and Las Vegas, Nevada combined into one.

**<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.**

So we have this teaching that each individual Christian himself who possesses the Holy Spirit, the body they are living in is a temple of the Lord.

It is interesting because there are two words for *temple* that are used in the pages of the New Testament. There is *Hieron* and there is *Naos*. That language of *Hieron* is the broader term that speaks of the temple facility, the whole structure—interior walls, exterior walls, court yards, everything included. That is where Jesus was when He cleansed the temple in Luke Chapter 19.

There is also the *Naos*. *Naos* is the word that is used in Scripture to speak of the inner sanctum, the inner place, the most holy place, where the Lord would manifest Himself. Brothers and sisters, that is the language that Paul used in this passage.

As followers of Christ, each and every one of us, we are a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus coming to reside within us. It is the desire of Jesus to come and cleanse His temple. He does that in an initial way and, brothers and sisters, He desires to do that in an ongoing way as well. Hence, the teaching here in I Corinthians Chapter 6.

We read all this about the Pharisees and their hardness of heart and we read about the different forms and patterns of sin that are evident throughout the human race, whether it be arrogance or pride or different forms of impurity and immorality of behavior and speech, in every single last one of us, we would have to say that we have all kinds of impurities that characterize our life.

We can look at all the different forms of sin and you can see traces of them in our lives. All of this is to bring us to humility, where we come to a place where we tell the Lord that we are messed up and fallen in sin. There are so many attitudes and forms of behavior, so many kinds of thought, they pollute things.

That is me. Is that you? I can tell you that is me. So, we come before the Lord humbly, saying, *Lord, on the one hand, you created me and I see so many amazing things about the human condition, but I have passions and desires and behaviors that are awry. Lord, I need Your grace because left to myself, I'm anything but clean.*

And Jesus, the Great Sacrificial Lamb, He comes in with mysterious and wonderful blood that purifies all that it touches. His blood is sprinkled on the temple, and that temple becomes clean by God's grace to those who will confess their sin and look to the One who came to cleanse them of their sin. He is the only savior, Jesus our Messiah. Good news, brothers and sisters, Jesus can cleanse a human being.

Then throughout this life, you will find in the teaching of Scripture that while the ultimate power of sin is severed, its presence remains. We still have desires that are awry and that will lead us astray, so we, as the people of God, say, *Lord, come into my life and look at it and, Lord, if there is any practice that is corrupt and not of your Kingdom, I ask you to flip that table and drive it out and replace it with the aroma of your truth*—just like He did in this passage.

This is the heart and soul of what it is to be a Christian, somebody who has recognized that they are sinners in need of grace and that grace is found in Christ and in Christ alone. There is no holier than thou attitude in the church. There is just holiness that comes from the Lord to us by God's grace as a gift.

These are things for us to take in and to hold on to. Jesus has created us. The Son of God has created us and He has redeemed us. Hence, we need to come saying, *Lord, You have all authority over this temple. Fill it as You will.* I pray that that is our prayer as we continue to walk with Him.

Will you join me as we close in a word of prayer?