

FOR PRAYER OR FOR PROFIT?

Luke 19:45-48

I have always detested "trampoline" sermons!
You know what a trampoline message is, don't you?
The preacher reads the passage and then goes off to preach about whatever is on his mind.
You never hear from the passage again.
In spite of my aversion to this method,
I would like to use it this evening. —Sort of!
I want to present briefly the message;
then talk about one aspect related to our lives
as individuals and as a body.

FORMAL PRESENTATION 19:28-48

Jesus' journey ends.
In preparation for formal rejection, Jesus presents Himself to the nation and
then, in tears, pronounces God's judgment.
[then Jesus moves into the temple,
His Father's house]

TEMPLE MINISTRY 19:45-48

CONFLICT CONCERNING THE TEMPLE 45-46

"Then He entered the temple area and began driving 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."

Jesus drives out the sellers in the temple. 45

The Act 19:45

Jesus conflicts with the system as He observes its perverted, materialistic operation.
Jesus demonstrates His authority
to cleanse and rule His Father's house.

The Reason 19:46

As He enters Court of the Gentiles, a sorry spectacle greets His eyes!
The court is desecrated.
It resembles a marketplace,
rather than a worship center.
With crowds for Passover, business is booming.
Prices are high.
Merchants pay generously
to put concessions in the marketplace.
—hustle and bustle of buyers and merchants;
noise, filth and stench of animals.
He's reminded of Jeremiah's day.
Jews were oppressing foreigners,
stealing and murdering.
Nevertheless they offer sacrifices,
as if such ritual would do any good!

Jer. 7:4, 11 *"Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!' ...Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you?"*

Now history is repeating itself!

Majesty of the temple should provoke worship.
They're filling it with crooked business dealings

–genuine worship is impossible!

Could this place be called a center of “worship”?

Court of the Gentiles is only place pagan Gentiles are permitted.

It provides place pagan neighbors can learn about the living God.

Thieves crowd out Gentiles

who might be attracted to find the Lord.

Since they have lost interest in that and don't want their pagan neighbors to turn to God anyway, the court is useless.

Instead of attracting Gentiles, it's a market to exchange money and purchase sacrifice animals.

Jesus reminds them of why the court was built. **Isaiah 56:6-8**

1. **Prophecies of Consolation 40-66**

Second half of Isaiah presents comfort for Israel, following judgment of first half.

God has judged His people;

He's ready to begin program of restoration.

a. Restoration of Israel 40-48 –in general terms

b. Redemption of Israel 49-57

Promises God will redeem His people

–makes possible entrance into kingdom.

i. Israel's Redeemer 52:13-53:12

ii. Israel's Salvation 54-55

iii. Israel's requirements 56-57

God wants His people to trust and love Him, to obey His Word and demonstrate justice.

This lifestyle will glorify Him

and distinguish those who belong to Him.

Foreigners who follow the LORD are blessed.

Their name will be included with those who worship God in His temple and enjoy His presence, because *"Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

God who gathers the exiles of Israel will gather others together with them, i.e., those who truly worship Him (even from among "pagans!") **56:6-8** *"Foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve Him, to love the Name of the Lord, and to worship Him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant– 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. 8 The Sovereign Lord declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."*

Prayer => *tephillah* <= *palal* =intervene, pray => prayer –common, general word

Men were not praying to relieve feelings, but to ask One wiser and mightier than they to take up their cause.

God's house was to be known

for pagans worshipping Him.

Thus, the court of the Gentiles.

But the place designed for them to worship the Lord has been overrun by "thieves".
Priests are more concerned about profits than about pagans who need
to come to the living God.

People could buy sacrifices outside,
or bring their own,
but the priests have inspectors
who reject them for any old reason.
It's easier to avoid the hassle
and buy animals inside.

Sellers charge 15 times more inside
than what it costs outside!

Jesus is upset because place God established to worship a holy and just God is being
used to exploit people who come to worship Him.

Wiersbe: "Instead of praying for people, the priests were preying on people!"

It's not a house of prayer, but a den of thieves.

Morgan: "A den of thieves is a place where thieves run to hide after they commit their wicked
deeds."

They're acting godly, but it's sham.

They're using it for their own profit.

People use religion to look good, appear religious, so *people* think well of them.

Jesus demonstrates His authority
over the temple by purifying it.

No wonder the leaders want to get Him.

He's striking their profits!

God's desire for prayer 46

God's desire is that the temple be
where His people meet Him!

—a center for prayer and worship.

It became so perverted no one could worship

CONFLICT WITH THE SYSTEM 19:47-48 *"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."*

Leaders' desire to kill Him 47

Though people want to hear His words,

His conflict with the system

causes the leaders to seek His destruction.

Jesus' open activity in the temple

When they come get Him:

"Why didn't you do this by day in the temple?

I've been there every day!

Are your deeds evil? illegal? too risky?"

Their desire to get Him

Jesus conflicts with the system

so the politicians are out to get Him.

There's a power struggle going on.

Leaders know how to play the game
in the politically correct way.

Like the woman who confronts her husband one evening as he's reading the paper. "Honey, what do you think of this hat?" He looks up, "That's the most ridiculous hat I ever saw. It doesn't do a thing for you. You'd better take it back!" "I can't do that," she replied, "this is my old hat!" ["*but* since you dislike it, maybe I should go buy a new one!"]

Politicians do what's needed to get votes—to get people to do what they want.

Doesn't require allegiance to truth,
nor even to what they believe is right.

Go along with crowd to get votes;
then use power for own agenda.

That's what's going on.

Messiah has come; politicians don't like it.

They want to preserve *status quo*.

They want to preserve power and prestige.

They don't want to surrender it,
even if Messiah comes.

Therefore they have to destroy Him.

They have to find a way people go along with.

The people are on Jesus' side.

The leaders are trying to kill Him, without alienating the crowd.

They're more afraid of *people*
than about truth or what *God* thinks.

People's desire to hear Him 48

In contrast to leaders, the people are "hanging on His Words."

—necks stretched and heads forward to hear
("on the edge of their seats!")

They're amazed at his teaching
and enjoy listening to Him.

They're doing opposite of people who don't want to hear His words.

They'll soon be motivated to turn when accusations are presented.

The leaders make clear that anyone who speaks in favor of Him is in trouble.

SO, the convincible go along with it
and the rest shut up under pressure.

PRIORITY OF PRAYER—Lessons for our life today:

Jesus quotes Isaiah to remind them that God's house, the house of prayer, is to be a meeting place between God and His people.

They aren't to conduct more unjust dealings
like the rest of the week

They're to meet GOD there!

This encounter should transform lives
and make them different.

But it doesn't.

They come together for business as usual!

They've lost sight of its reason for being: to meet God!

That takes us back to purpose of the temple.

At dedication, Solomon doesn't name it,
but he speaks to the issue!

He has built a place where God can dwell forever (13)

1 Ki. 8:28-30 He prays: "Give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. 29 May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said! "My Name shall be there, so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. 30 Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.""

The temple is a meeting place between God and His people where they come to Him, pour out their hearts, and He hears their prayer.

But it lost it's reason for being!

God made us to meet with Him.

He made man in His image, so we would enjoy meeting with Him.

Like the temple, we lost our reason for being!

Billy Graham: **"He placed a "God-shaped" vacuum in each of us, that only He can fill."**

We need meaningful relationships.

We need to be loved.

We need to feel significant

We need someone to listen to us, heal our pain.

God is the only One who can meet those needs.

But we try to fill them with everything else under the sun.

Nothing else fills the vacuum.

Our husbands can't fill it.

Possessions can't fill it.

Our wives can't fill it.

Money can't fill it.

Our families can't fill it.

Sex can't fill it.

Our jobs can't fill it.

Alcohol can't fill it.

Pleasure can't fill it.

Drugs can't fill it.

The need is a need for GOD!

He created us to need Him—to meet with Him.

We keep looking for SOMETHING—ANYTHING!—

to fill our need for meaningful relationships,

for love and significance.

God is the only One who can meet those needs.

Our reason for being:

to spend time with God—time in prayer.

We're designed to be a people of prayer.

If we're not spending time with Him,

we're empty and dry!

Do YOU have a thirst for God?

Don't try to fill it with something else. It won't work!

The church, God's people,

ought to be known as people of prayer.

We're not a profit making enterprise where people get together to get rich, by a sales campaign or by getting together to pray for wealth.

We're to be known as people of prayer.

A major concern: Our faith is too human!

It's too natural and naturalistic.

What is there in our life that can't be explained any other way than by God's presence?

*If the Spirit were taken out of the world,
would our lives be different? How?*

Are we spending time –privately at home
–corporately with the body of Christ,
talking to God–worshiping Him?
surrendering ourselves to Him?
asking Him to turn our lives around?

I realize this probably isn't a black and white issue.

*But, have we become so desperate for Him that we drop everything and cry in
desperation for more of His presence?*

Are we asking Him to transform our lives?

Or, are we, like the religious leaders of Israel,
content to come to church on Sunday
and go through the motions?

It's time to PRAY!

***"We may be able to do many things for God besides pray,
but I doubt if we can do anything for God UNTIL we have prayed!"***

We're to be known as a people of prayer.

Andrew Murray: *With Christ in the School of Prayer.* His thesis: purpose for prayer:
to accomplish God's will.

In fact it was Murray's contention that you can pray in such a way that God will always give
you what you ask for.

We can pray specific prayer for the desires of our heart with the assurance that He will
give us what we desire.

THE KEY: Desire more than *anything* that God's will be done on earth as in heaven.

We should become so in tune with God
that we want what He wants;
we seek His will above all else.

Then we can ask whatever we want, knowing that He will give us the desire of our heart
The greatest desire of our hearts becomes Him. And He delights to give us more of
Himself.

Murray goes beyond that concept to insist we ask for specific needs with confidence
when we our greatest desire is to do His will.