

Matthew ch 21Vs 1-17

We resume this morning in our studies of the book of Matt. picking it up in ch 21 as we inch closer and closer to the conclusion of this gospel. There are 28 ch in the book of Matt so Lord willing within the 1st quarter of the year we will be moving on from this gospel to the next area that He has for us. But you recall that in ch 20 Jesus teaches a profound lesson on the grace of God through the parable of the workers in the vineyard and how God deals with us not according to justice but according to grace. and There were several valuable points to be received from that parable as it pertains to God's goodness and His grace, and I would encourage you that if you weren't with us a couple weeks back to study that with us that you grab a copy of that tape.

You recall that we also seen where Jesus predicted again His death, and resurrection and described the events that would take place in great detail as He was seeking to at this point draw His disciples into a deeper intimacy with Him so that they might be aware of what was to take place in His life. So that they wouldn't be discouraged and so that they might recall later how that it was all necessary according to scripture. They never seemed to get it at the time, but later on as they looked back they would be able to see how that the Messiah had to suffer and die and shed His blood in order to atone for the sin of the world. and Oh yeah, He told us how all this would happen, and you remember in Luke's gospel after He had resurrected 2 of the disciples were walking down the road to Emmaus and Jesus came along side them and began to talk to them and they didn't recognize Him. and He said hey what are you guys talking about and why are you so sad, and one of them said man are you a stranger around here, don't you know what's happened? and Jesus said what? and They said you know, the man Jesus of Nazareth, He was a prophet, and mighty in the word of God and in deed, and we were hoping that He was the One to redeem Israel but they crucified Him a few days ago. and Besides today is the 3rd day and we haven't seen Him, a couple of ladies said that they went to the tomb and His body was gone, but Him they didn't see. *"Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."*

In vs 32 of that same ch the 2 disciples said to one another, *"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"* So later on they would get it, but for now they still didn't understand, and so right after His prediction about His suffering and rejection in Jerusalem, James and John's mom said, Lord I have a favor to ask of you, and He said what is it? and She said grant that my 2 boys can sit on your right and on your left when you come into your kingdom. and He said to her, you don't even understand what it is that you ask, but even if you did it's not for Me to decide, those seats are hand picked by My Father.

To paraphrase; He said, but let Me remind you of the principal that I've tried to teach you so many times before, if you want to be great in the kingdom, you won't get there by becoming great here on earth. In the way that this world sees greatness, by lording over people. If you want to be great in the kingdom, become a servant in this world, if you want to be 1st there, become a slave here, follow My example.

Here I am the King of kings and the Lord of lords and I didn't come to be served I came to serve and to give My life as ransom for many. Paul the apostle (inspired by the Holy Spirit) gives this commentary concerning Jesus Christ *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

If you want to be exalted by God, you need to humble yourself before Him, and serve Him by serving others here on earth, that's just the way it works. and Finally we seen Him heal 2 blind men, and what I would have you notice is that this time Jesus didn't exhort them not to tell anybody. So far as Jesus would heal people He would say something like, tell no one what has happened, why because the time for Him to be revealed hadn't yet come, but now that time has come and so He doesn't tell them to be silent about it and upon receiving their sight, they begin to follow Him. Even as we follow Jesus having had our eyes opened by Him.

Vs1-3

Now there is some difference of opinion regarding this little incident, in that did Jesus prophecy where the colt was to be found? and They found it right where He said it would be, and when the people heard that it was the Lord who had need of it then they immediately released it into their care. Or could it be that in a previous visit to that city that He told some people what would be going on and that He requested the use of their colt. and That the “password” so to speak so that they would know that it was indeed Him who was usurping the colt and making use of it was “the Lord has need of them.” In reality they are both speculation and since the bible doesn't tell us it's fairly pointless to argue over it, the bottom line is that whether He made previous arrangements or it was a divine appointment supernaturally arranged either way He had need of the donkey and so He got it.

Vs4-5

So why all the public hype, why was Jesus sending them to get the donkey and it's colt so that He might ride it into Jerusalem? Because He was on a direct mission to fulfill the prophecy of Zech 9:9, now the disciples still didn't understand why He was having them do this, apparently this scripture never really entered their minds. John 12:16 tells us regarding this event that, "*His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.*" So the recording of this scripture at this point was done in hindsight, looking back at what Jesus did and remembering this specific prophecy regarding the Messiah.

Vs6-7

Them being the clothes that they sat on the colt, He didn't ride both donkey's, not only would that be something that would look silly and be next to impossible, but the Prophecy was clear, the King would ride upon the colt.

Vs8

John tells us specifically that they were branches off of palm trees, and so we get the name Palm Sunday and so we know that Jesus has entered into His last week prior to His crucifixion. The time of the Passover is near, and in order for Jesus to fulfill all the O.T types it's necessary that He be crucified during Passover. and The fact that it is Passover would indicate to us that at this point there would be somewhere to the tune of 2million Jews in Jerusalem at this time, and so the city would be teeming with people right about now.

Vs9-11

That word "moved" in vs 10 is the Greek word, "seio" (si'o), that same word was used concerning the earthquake that took place at Jesus' crucifixion. In other words the whole city was shaken up by this massive entourage of people giving glory to this man as He entered into the city.

They were crying out, out of the Messianic Psalm. Psalm 118, which says, "*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*" What day, the day that God has prepared for man's deliverance, the day that God has set for the Messiah to come, and to be revealed, this is that day. and Then right after that we read these words, Hosanna, or literally "save now", blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Save now in the highest. But what was their application of this vs? Was it acknowledging Jesus as their Lord and King, and a cry to be delivered from the bondage of their sin? Remember these guys weren't really looking for that, they were looking rather for a political Messiah who would break the Roman yoke and set up His kingdom on earth.

John tells us that these people were cheering Jesus on because many of them had seen Him raise Lazarus from the dead, others because they had heard about that sign. and So they're all fired, Hosanna, save us now, if you're going up to overthrow the Romans, we're behind you. But less than a week later when they realized their hopes and dreams of that happening wasn't going to become a reality, these same people will cry out crucify Him, we have no king but Caesar.

Now when we get to vs 12 we know from Marks gospel that this is the next day, the 1st day He rode into Jerusalem, looked around, and because the hour was late He left. He didn't stay the night in Jerusalem until He was arrested. So this happening here in vs 12 didn't immediately follow what we often refer to as the triumphal entry, but rather the next day.

Vs12-13

These people were making merchandise of the people of God and Jesus can't stand it when people fleece the flock of God. We're called to feed the sheep not fleece the sheep, and Jesus had cleansed the temple once before in the beginning of His ministry, we find that in the 2nd chapter of John. and It's significant that the Messiah stakes His claim of authority in the central shrine of His people. You see these people were (as I said) ripping off the people. and What these moneychangers would do is exchange the Roman currency into the temple shekel, because they wouldn't allow you to give Roman currency to God. The offering they would allow was the temple shekel, and so to make it "convenient" for you of course, the moneychangers were there in the temple to exchange your filthy lucre for the temple shekel.

The problem is that they weren't equating the temple shekel as equal to Roman currency, they would of course tell you that the temple shekel was worth much more. and So I don't know what the rate of exchange was, but let's just say for the sake of example 2 to 1. and So for every \$\$ that you wanted to offer God, it would cost you 2. and So they would scrape off the profits for themselves and split it with the priests who were in on the sham with them. Also, you could buy a dove out on the street for say .25 a piece, but the ones in the temple had upon them the priests seal, and they were going for more like \$5.00 a piece. So if you went out and bought a dove to offer to the Lord as a burn offering or whatever, and took it into the priest and upon examining it, (noticing of course that it didn't have the priestly seal) would carefully examine it until he could find something wrong with it. Because they were to have no blemish, and so he would say, I can't offer this to God, take it back, but all of these over here have been approved and he would charge the guy \$5.00 for what he could normally get for a quarter. All because he was playing on this guy's conscience that these were the only offerings approved with out blemish. So they were making profit off of the people who desired to worship God. They had designed schemes to profit off of the pure desire of the people to worship God. Sound familiar?

Here Jesus rebukes that practice saying, "*It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'*" Quoting from Isaiah 56:7 and Jer 7:11 He drove them out and cleansed the temple. Plus where this was taking place was in the courts where the gentiles were allowed to come and worship.

So if you weren't a Jew and you wanted to worship God, this was as far as you could go. You couldn't go into the inner courts of the temple, so if you wanted to come and worship God and spend some time in prayer or worship, you had to do so in the middle of all this marketing and hustle bustle. You didn't get quite time with the Lord, you had to try and worship God in the middle of all this distraction, and thievery. So Jesus overturned the tables and drove out all that was hindering the temple of God from operating as it was intended to. Now 1 Cor 6:19-20 says this, "*do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*" Is there anything in your heart that's hindering the temple of the Holy Spirit to "operate" as God intends for it to?

What is it that's taking place in your life, that if you truly gave Jesus the reigns in your heart, He would overturn, and drive out of your life? So that you might be a temple set apart to God, seeking His face and His purposes exclusively, something else this teaches us is that it's Jesus that does the cleansing. You can't prepare yourself adequately for Jesus, so many people say, well, there's just a lot going on in my life right now and some things that I'm trying to get straitened out. As soon as my life is in order then I'll consider Jesus, but right now things are a mess, let me tell you something; things are a mess because you haven't considered Jesus. Its Jesus who does the cleansing of the temple, if you could clean it out, you wouldn't need Jesus. But what does this teach us, that it's Jesus who clears out the mess and sets His home in order, and I find that it's not a one time deal either even as He did this more than once even during His physical ministry here on earth. I wish it were, I wish that I would learn my lesson once and for all concerning those things that clutter up the temple of my heart.

Instead what's closer to the truth (at least for me) is to say that just when I think I've learned my lesson, suddenly I find that old junk beginning to clutter up my heart again. Distracting me from seeking God whole-heartedly and allowing my temple to be set apart exclusively for the purposes for which God designed it. and How I thank God for the promises of Phil 1:6-7 which says, "*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*" and 2 Tim 2:13 which says, "*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*" Jesus is always so faithful to come in and deal with those things in a radical way, and dispel them from our lives, if we'll only give Him the opportunity.

Not only does He desire purity in our hearts and bodies, individually as the temple of the Holy Spirit, but also corporately as the body of Christ. and See we see here that once the temple was cleansed, that it begins to function as God intended for it to.

Vs14

People began to come to Jesus, in the temple and receive a meaningful and lasting work of God in their lives, that's what the temple was designed for, it was to be a place where people could hook up with God and receive His work in their lives. Not be bothered by a bunch of rip off artist in a swap meet. Again where are you at, are people able to come to you when they need to receive from God and they're in need of direction, can you point them to Jesus and pray with them, or do they leave you more confused than when they came. Because there's so much clutter in your own life that you're not even operating as God would have you to, and I'm not speaking of perfection, I'm talking about general ministry, ministering to peoples needs. That's what we're called to do, and I know that every now and then we all get a little bumped and bruised and we need some spiritual RandR and encouragement ourselves. But for the most part if you know Jesus, you're to be the one ministering, not be the one being ministered to. These people were able to come to the temple and meet Jesus and receive from Him a meaningful and lasting work of God in their lives.

Vs15

Isn't that interesting, these chief priests had no qualms or bitterness and criticism towards the thievery and all the wrong doings that were defiling the temple. But they were indignant towards the wonderful things that Jesus was doing and how he allowed these little children to worship Him. I mean it was bad enough that crowds were enthusiastic about His entry into the city, but now He's come in and destroyed their lucrative and sinful source of income. By which they were making money hand over fist, and as if that wasn't bad enough He didn't leave when He was finished but rather, he stuck around and began doing miracles and receiving the praise of these kids. These children had more discernment then the chief priests.

Vs16 (1st ½)

As if to say, aren't you going to stop them, they're praising you as if you're the Messiah. So He says to them here (finish) Quoting again from Psalm ch 8 vs 2, and He's rebuking them here, you guys are the chief priests, don't you ever read your bibles, David made this statement, hundreds and hundreds of yrs ago.

What it indicates is that to God, praise from the mouths of the little children is perfect praise, Jesus would often point to the children and rebuke adults showing how much we have to learn from them. We've seen this more than once as we've journeyed through Matt's gospel. Unless you become as little children you will by no means enter the kingdom of God. Allow the little children to come unto Me and do not forbid them, for such is the kingdom of God, and here we read, "*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants, You have perfected praise.*" The smallest of children offer praise that is acceptable to God.

Vs17

So even as they rejected Him, So He has rejected them, and He left them and went out of the city to Bethany. Probably to stay with Mary and Martha and Lazarus, reverting back for just a moment we see in the passages that we just read, 4 characteristics that the Lord would have or is looking for in His corporate temple.

#1 in vs 13, it's to be a house of prayer, you can never pray too much as a Christian. 1 Thess 5:16-18 tells us to "*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*"

As we gather here there should be prayer that is offered up before God, there are those of you who sit and quietly intercede for me. That while I am teaching that God would anoint my heart and my thoughts and my words so that His people might be fed and those who don't know Him might come to know Him. That Satan's strongholds would be broken and the Holy Spirit would be loosed in the lives of those who don't know Him and in some of the lives of those who do know Him. Every Monday night I gather with a group of guys, primarily those in some form of leadership to pray for you. and This ministry, and God's continued blessing upon this place and that He would break the chains of religiosity and apathy and complacency in this community and that revival might bust loose in Joplin Missouri, and that we're open to being used and desire to be used in that capacity. Because God isn't willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, and we pray that many would come to repentance through the work that He's doing here. His house shall be called a house of prayer.

#2 We discussed a little bit earlier (vs14) This should be a place where people are being helped, Jesus healed the blind and the lame as they came to Him in the temple. This is to be a place where you can hook up with God undistracted and receive and meaningful and eternally lasting work of God in your life. A place where you can hear His word and receive help and healing in your time of need.

#3 Is closely related vs 15 (read 1st 1/2), this is to be a place where Power is released, it's amazing to me every time someone comes forward to give their lives and hearts to Jesus Christ, because it just continues to bear witness that God is doing amazing and powerful and miraculous things in our midst.

Finally #4 vs 16

This is to be a place where praise is expressed, as we worship God, the One who brings us the fulfillment and satisfaction of our hearts, the One who is worthy of our highest praise, Who fills our heart with joy, being thankful to Him who has purchased our salvation. So may this continue to be a place where prayer is offered, people are helped, power is released, and praise is expressed.