

Matthew 21:12-17

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[0 : 00] Matthew 21. Let's just pray. Lord, I seem to have achieved a frazzled state of mind this morning with all that's gone on.

But Lord, I ask you to still my thoughts and to focus them in on you. Father, as we come to your word, I pray that you will speak to us from your word and you will change us by implanting your word in our hearts.

In Jesus name. Amen. So, Matthew 21. You will remember, I'm sure, that last time we dealt with what is normally called the triumphal entry or some people refer to it as the first Palm Sunday. Where Jesus entered the city. On the back of a donkey fulfilling prophecies from both Daniel chapter nine and from Zechariah chapter nine.

And what we read in Mark's account last week was that having caused this furor, everybody's piling out in the streets, everybody's worshipping, throwing in branches on the floor, throwing their coats down.

[1 : 13] All that happened.

And by fulfilling prophecies, he left them in no doubt as to who he was. And then he had a look around the temple and left. And what we are going to study now is the result of him having a look around the temple.

What he saw in the temple and what he subsequently did about it. I'll just pick up on one thing before we carry on because I may well get questions about it if I don't pick it up now.

If you look at Matthew's account and Mark's account, they actually switch the event as to the fig tree and the fig tree we're going to study next week. But the event of the cursed fig tree happens after these events is recorded after these events in Matthew.

And it's recorded before these events in Mark. And it's Mark that gives the true chronology. But we'll return to that next week when we study the fig tree. But it just saved you asking me questions about it before I deal with it next week.

[2 : 45] So having seen all the goings on in the temple on the previous day. He comes back today to correct measures. And we need to be reminded of two things.

Number one, this all takes place in the last week of Jesus's life. We started this little section of scripture basically on the Saturday.

I always get confused as to whether we're now on Tuesday or Wednesday. But we've progressed through the week. And he's presented himself on the 10th of Nisan, which in itself fulfills prophecy. For those of you that don't know what that means, Nisan was the Jewish month, the Jewish name for the month in which it happened. And if you remember, when they set the Passover, they had to take the lamb on the 10th of the month.

And so Jesus appears as the lamb on the 10th of the month. Right on time, fulfilling prophecy. And then we then go through the last week of his life, which will eventually finish up with the crucifixion account, which obviously we'll come to.

[4 : 00] And one of the questions you might have in your mind when we read this next section is, what was all the fuss about? Why did he get so angry?

A few animals and a few traders in the temple. Why was that reason for such incredible anger? And I would just remind us that in Psalm 69 and verse 9, it actually says that the zeal for his house consumed him.

Or not the zeal for his house, but the zeal for his father's house consumed him. So the temple, yes, it was just a building. And we get far too attached to buildings.

You know, there are churches all over the land. Somebody once said that it was a New Zealand chap who said churches are like possums. Most of them lie beside the road dead.

But when we focus on buildings, that's the way we finish up. We got a building and inside what goes on? Well, actually, not a lot. But where church and church in our generation has nothing to do with the building.

[5 : 14] We could be out in the field. Church is the gathering of his people. The temple was created for the gathering of God's people in that day. And became very, very precious to the Lord.

And we'll see more about that as we go through. But one of the things that is precious unto God, and we could be confident in that as we sit here and study his word this morning, is that when we gather together before him to study his word, he loves it.

And he absolutely hates things that either come against it or teach incorrect doctrine because he hates his children being led astray. He loves the gathering of his people.

So let's read it. And it's a fairly short amount of reading. We're going to read from verse 12 to verse 17 of Matthew 21.

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

[6 : 21] And he said to them, it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but you're making it a robber's den. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them.

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things he had done and the children who were shouting in the temple, Hosanna to the son of David, they became indignant and said to him, do you hear what these children are saying?

And Jesus said to them, yes. Have you ever read out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes? You have prepared praise for yourself. And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.

So just a few verses, but very, very rich in stuff that reveals things about the Lord to us. The account is recorded in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Matthew, Mark and Luke together are called the Synoptic Gospels because they are very much filled with the same details and the same accounts, although very slight variations depending on the view that the writer is trying to establish.

[7 : 33] And this is actually the second time that Jesus has driven people out of the temple. The first time is in the second chapter of John's Gospel.

And if you just want to quickly turn there, we'll look at it. Just go back to John's Gospel. Sorry, go forward to John's Gospel because you've got to turn right to get to John's Gospel from now.

But back in terms of time, because what we have effectively are bookends for Jesus's ministry. John's Gospel, chapter two.

Now, in John's Gospel, chapter two, what he does is the first of his miracles, which is where he turns water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. And then we get to verse 13.

The Passover of the Jews was near and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and he found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves and the money changers seated at their tables.

[8 : 33] And he made a scourge of cords and he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

And those who were selling the doves or to those who were selling the doves, he said, take these things away. Stop making my father's house a place of business. His disciples remember that it was written, zeal for your house will consume you.

Psalms 69, verse nine. The Jews then said to him, what sign do you show us as your authority for doing these things? And Jesus answered and said, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

And of course, the Jews then said, hang on, it took us 46 years to build this temple. How are you going to destroy it? But I picture Jesus doing this because it goes on to say in verse 21.

But he was speaking of the temple of his body. And I can kind of picture him saying when they said, by what authority do you do this? I can picture him doing this, destroy this temple and I'll raise it up in three days.

[9 : 39] And I can picture him indicating his own person as he says it. But what he's done, if you think that that was at his first Passover.

And what we're dealing with today is at his last Passover. So you've got these bookends to his ministry where he goes into the temple and does what we will see is quite a miraculous thing. It's never recorded. I've never heard it taught as one of Jesus's miracles. But we'll have a little look at it because I think it was my opinion. And you can argue with me if you like, but we'll look at it later. So he goes into the temple at the start of his ministry and basically says, what are you doing in my father's house?

And then he ministers for three years and he comes to his last Passover and he goes back into the temple and nothing has changed.

And he's doing the same thing again. Now, just to give you background. This city would have been teeming with people at both occasions.

[10:46] Josephus, the historian Josephus reckons that the average population of Jerusalem at the time would have been about 80,000.

And that Passover, it would have likely increased to about two and a half million. I can't prove that to you, but that's Josephus and other historians view that. And this was because the law required every family, the head of the household to take his family, if at all possible, to the temple to celebrate Passover.

And therefore, that was a call for those families to go and be in the presence of God. Whatever you're doing, drop what you're doing, get to the temple, because then your focus will be on the Lord. So it was a call for families to sit at the feet of God.

That was the whole idea that was espoused when it was set up. And so people would come from everywhere and you would have all the all the rented accommodation would be full, all the hotels, all the guest houses.

People would take other people into their homes. And many people, because of the kind climate, would actually sleep in the open air or take a tent. The place was cluttered with people, absolutely rammed.

[12:00] And the temple area was never supposed to be a place of trade. This is just a diagram of the temple.

Can you see, gentlemen? Try not to stand in your way. Now, the plan was this. So this area here is the court of the Gentiles.

And you can see that it also is here. Now, the biggest area of the temple is the court of the Gentiles. The biggest floor space is the court of the Gentiles. And that was the place where anyone could go. But it was supposed to be a holy place. So it was only a place where those would go who were interested in fellowship with God. And it was the biggest space, which in itself is curious, because in those days, the Jews were supposed to have preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and they hadn't made a very good fist of it, to be frank.

So, but on the other court, so you've got the court of Israel here, which is for Jews.

[13:13] You've got the court of the women, which is here. Now, on the entrance to this, you know, going from the court of the Gentiles inward, there's a big sign that says, if you pass beyond this point and you're a Gentile, you can lose your life.

And they would execute you for going, this is my words, not any other words, closer to God than you should. But the Gentiles were not allowed in, but there was space for a huge number of Gentiles.

And what this speaks of is that God has always wanted to embrace the Gentiles. He's never been, although he set the Jews up as his chosen people for the purpose of giving his oracles to the world, he's never blocked out anyone who expressed interest in him.

He has always welcomed those who wanted to know him. And the very purpose of having the temple built was so that we could get to know him. So there was no other purpose for the temple other than that.

It was for people to go and put themselves before God and say, God, come and see us, come and visit us. And some of the early accounts of temple life, going back to, you go back far enough, they didn't have a building, they had a tent, a tabernacle.

[14:40] But they couldn't get into the tabernacle because the glory of God was so powerful, they fell over. They were knocked back by the sheer presence of God.

But that doesn't mean God was against them. It was just that they couldn't stand. Their sinful selves could not stand in the presence of God. So the temple was God's idea and it was always called

God's house.

It wasn't anybody else's house. And of course, the priests have forgotten this and they think it's their house. And when it comes to you following this through the notes afterwards, I've already got you in trouble.

But if you imagine then that at Passover, you've got millions of people in the city. You've got hundreds of thousands of animals.

Again, from Josephus, he reckons that in one particular year, a quarter of a million animals were slaughtered in the temple.

[15:44] So I had this spoof thing going on with Joe earlier in the week. I said, hey, Joe, we're missing out on a trick here. We could charge admission.

Yeah, yeah, but people wouldn't pay it. Well, if we promised them enough, they would. You know, we promised them healing, they'll pay. Can you see how the same mentality has been transferred to today?

Just a different bunch of actors. But so many churches are making people feel that they can have material gain from coming into church.

If they give you money, if you give to my ministry, God will bless you. And so you finish up with third world countries giving thousands, if not millions, to these ministries who should be giving of their wealth to these third world countries, not robbing them of it.

It's very much back to front because we have, broadly speaking, I'm not suggesting it's in this room. I certainly hope it isn't. But broadly speaking, we have the same mentality.

[16:54] Here's an opportunity to make some cash. What they did was they used to have originally outside the court in this sort of area. They had what was known as the bazaars of Annas.

Annas was the high priest. It's actually the bazaars of the sons of Annas. So Annas was the high priest. And he created this family business where his sons would be outside changing money and selling animals.

But then we've got a problem, you see, because people are going to bring their own money. Ah, yeah. But what we'll do is we'll mint our own coins. And those are the only coins we'll accept.

So when you come with your own money, you have to change your own money for an acceptable currency. And we'll charge you extortionate rates for the exchange. Utterly corrupt.

And then, of course, people are going to bring their own animals. Here's my lamb. I've inspected it. It's perfect. But the priests then inspect it.

[17:56] And guess what? They find it not to be perfect. So I'm sorry that lamb's no good. You'll have to buy one from us at an extortionate price. And so what you've got is the people who are supposed to be serving God and serving the people are committing extortion on the poor and the spiritually impoverished who are turning up to have fellowship with God with sincere hearts, having expended of their own wealth to do it.

And they're being ripped off by the very people who are supposed to be helping them to get in touch with God. And see a priesthood becoming corrupt, eh?

Unfortunately, we have massive examples of it in our current generation. Yeah, so this place is so that people can be put in touch with God.

Jesus comes to the temple that he loves and finds hundreds, if not thousands, of animals in the court of the Gentiles, people sitting at money tables.

You see, what happened with the bazaars of Annas that were outside? After a while, the priest said, well, take them inside. You've got a more captive audience if you take them inside. You know, it's easier to get money off people if you bring it inside, because as they come into the temple, you've got them.

[19:28] They can't get round you. When you're outside, they can walk round your stalls and get in the temple without passing you by. But if you're inside, you've got them. So that big area that was for the prayer of the Gentiles, for the worship of the Gentiles, is full of thousands of animals, certainly thousands of people, possibly even more, possibly tens of thousands of people.

There's this complete melee going on. There's dung everywhere. Having that many animals about is not a clean business.

So this part of the temple, which is supposed to be dedicated to the worship of God, is a filthy place. And a place where you wouldn't want to spend time worshipping God.

That's why animals weren't supposed to be in there, apart from when they go to be sacrificed. But what they had were herds of these things who were there for sale, just messing the place up. Turn with me to two scriptures. We're going to combine two accounts in scripture, just to give you a bit of a clue as to why the Lord was so attached to the temple.

[20 : 47] They'll turn to 1 Chronicles 22. So that's in the Old Testament, and it's quite a long way to the left.

So Solomon in this chapter is charged with the task of building a temple. So verse 6, this is David who's in play here.

And David, to give you a bit of history, David has been forbidden from building a house of the Lord because he was a man of war and because he had killed people. And so he turns to his son Solomon.

Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. David said to Solomon, My son, I have intended to build a house to the name of the Lord my God, but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, You have shed much blood and have waged great wars.

You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before me. Behold, a son will be born to you who shall be a man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side, for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.

[22 : 09] He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. So Solomon here is commissioned to build the temple.

And he's not commissioned by the king or by some dignitary. He's actually commissioned by the Lord through David.

David, you can't do it. Get your son to do it. So this is God saying, I want the temple. And we've already discussed the purpose of the temple, but this is where God says, I want a temple.

I want Solomon to build it for me. Now turn to 2 Chronicles, next book to the right, chapter 6. 2 Chronicles, chapter 6.

And we're going to read from verse 46 through to chapter 7, verse 16. We'll have a job to read from verse 46, because there isn't one. I've obviously written it down wrong.

[23 : 13] It must be 36. So this is some temple activity for you.

The reason I've picked it will become clear. When they sin against you, for there is no man who does not sin, and you are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near.

If they take thought of the land where they have taken captive and repent and make supplication to you in the land of their captivity, saying, we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, and have acted wickedly.

If they return to you with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been taken captive, and pray towards their land, which you have given to their fathers, and the city which you have chosen, and towards the house which I have built for your name.

So this temple was not just significant for those who were in it, but it was significant in the consciousness of people who had been taken captive and had been taken far away, that they should remember the Lord their God, and they should direct their prayers towards God's house.

[24 : 37] Verse 39. Then hear from heaven, from your dwelling place, their prayers and supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

Now, O my God, I pray, let your eyes be open, your ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.

Let your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let your godly ones rejoice in what is good. O Lord God, do not turn away the face of your anointed, and remember your loving kindness to your servant David.

So this is a plea. The temple's built, and this is a plea. Lord, now that we've built it, please answer the prayers that are prayed in it, and the prayers from afar that are directed towards it.

The temple is therefore something central in the interaction between man and God at this point.

Verse chapter 7. Now, when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

[25 : 44] The priest could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the house. All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the Lord upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshipped and gave praise to the Lord, saying, truly he is good, truly his loving kindness is everlasting.

Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the Lord. King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

Thus, the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. The priests stood at their posts, the Levites also, with the instruments and music to the Lord, which King David had made for giving praise to the Lord.

For his loving kindness is everlasting. Wherever he gave praise by their means, while the priests on the other side blew trumpets and all Israel was standing.

Then Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord. For there he offered the burnt offerings and the fat of the peace offering because the bronze altar which Solomon had made was not able to contain the burnt offering, the grain offering and the fat.

[27 : 00] So Solomon observed the feast at that time for seven days and all Israel with him. A very great assembly who came from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt.

On the eighth day, they held a solemn assembly for the dedication of the altar. They observed seven days and the feast seven days. Then on the 23rd day of the seventh month, he sent the people to their tents rejoicing and happy of heart because of the goodness of the Lord.

Sorry, of the goodness that the Lord had shown to David and to Solomon and to his people. So we have this amazing event where everybody is saying, we've got the temple now, Lord, you come and fill it.

It's at the heart of everything. He said, Lord, we want you. You are amazing. You are wonderful. We lift you up. And then verse 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's palace and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the Lord and in his place.

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. God had chosen it as a place for sacrifice.

[28 : 21] If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain or if I command the locusts to devour the land or if I send pestilence among the people and my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sins and will heal their land.

Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. For I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever and my eyes and my heart will be there perpetually.

As for you, if you walk before me as your father David walked, even do according to all that I have commanded you and will keep my statutes and my ordinance, then I will establish your royal throne as a covenant with your father David, saying you shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.

He goes on to say what happens if you turn away. So the place has been established by God for the worship of God and God has said when you do that, I will answer your prayers.

It will be a successful exchange between us. So it's little wonder that then what happens is the people, particularly the priests, who've got a bit of a vested interest, taking a bit on the side here and a bit on the side there and just committing extortion and robbery.

[29 : 55] Jesus was unequivocal. He said, you've turned it into a robber's den. What they've done is they've taken these things which was so precious to God and had such a precious purpose in the heart of God, which was to commune with his people and they've destroyed that.

The court of the Gentiles, the biggest court there is full of dung and animals and racket and noise. You know, I've come to the temple to pray. You can imagine it, can't you? They've taken something that was dear to the heart of God, where God set it up and then once they consecrated it, God said, I will be with you when you come in this place.

The Jews were expected when they attended the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles, the big feasts, but the Passover in particular, they were supposed to bring with them the half drachma tax. So they would have to have this money, half a drachma, which is quite a lot of money to a Jew in those days. But having scrimped and scraped to get the money together, they get there and find that their money was unacceptable and they had to go through an extortionate exchange rate to get

the half drachma so they could pay the tax.

[31 : 22] It was all corrupt. I won't belabor that anymore. I just want to consider for a moment before we move on in the text because I think we're still only on about verse 2 or something of the text, but turn back to the text in Matthew, but while you turn there, think on this, and this is where I think we gloss over this a bit too easily sometimes.

It's still the first verse and it says, he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves and drove out all those who were selling in the temple.

And one tends to think of this as, you know, you've got somebody sit at a table here and he gets shown out and you've got somebody over here trying to flog lambs.

This was hundreds of animals and loads of people. And any men in the room who kind of fancy themselves as a bit butch, think of yourself trying to achieve this.

If I tried to achieve this, I'd get worked over. I'd get beaten up. And the people who didn't want to leave the temple could have just said, nah, on your bike.

[32 : 51] There's more of us than there is of you. We're not going anywhere. You want us to leave? See if you can make us. There could have easily been, I mean, you've got Jesus on his own. He's got no army to help him.

The only army present is in the Antonia Fortress, which is on the diagram when you get it, where the Jews used to have a garrison of soldiers to sort out when there was a riot in the temple.

He used to call them down to sort it out. But Jesus goes in there alone and drives them all out. How does that work? Hang on a minute. If I let you drive me out, I've got no money for my work today.

It's likely to meet with resistance. And I say that only to make this point. It's as if they were compelled to comply.

I think it shows that the Lord has authority in a way that few miracles do. I mean, lots of the miracles show he has authority over sickness and he has authority over diseases and demonic possession and the weather at times and he can produce food when he feeds the 5,000 out of a couple of loaves and a few fish.

[34 : 00] But surely this shows that he can simply command that people do something and they have no option but to do it.

Now, you may think I've over-egged that. I don't know. But I couldn't read it any other way because I've... In part of my work in life, I've had to deal with the occasional angry crowd.

And it's incredibly intimidating. The idea of just walking in and going, this is not going on in my father's house. Get out! And they all go.

Speaks of a level of authority that we don't really understand, I would suggest. But we see it in other places in the gospel. You may remember there's another place where they carried him to the top of a hill ready to throw him off and it says, and he walked through the crowd.

How? If they've got me by the arms and legs and they're going to throw me off a cliff. Just walk through the crowd and walk away. It speaks of authority that we don't really understand.

[35 : 06] And that authority, when it's on my side, gives me great comfort. So let's read on. I hope you're finding this useful.

Um... Verse 13. My house should be called a house of prayer, but you're making it a robber's den. He's quoted... He's quoted from Isaiah 56 and verse 7.

Turn there quickly. Isaiah 56 and verse 7. Now when the Lord is dealing with Jews, he often just quotes from the Old Testament.

And what he does, therefore, is he directs them to understand what's happening in the heart of God. And so you always read the verse that he quotes, but you kind of read around it as well.

And so, Isaiah 56 and verse 7 simply says, even those I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

[36 : 12] So that's the bit that God wants people to understand. What you're doing, you're doing in my house of prayer. But of course, when the Jews read Isaiah 56, that's referring to God's house of prayer.

So Jesus is aligning himself with God. You know, what are you doing in my house of prayer? Hang on, this is God's house of prayer.

Yeah, my house of prayer. Do you see the link that I'm making there? But if we read a little bit before, what was it, verse 6?

Verse 7. If we read a little bit before, it says this. Start with verse 3. Let not the foreigner, or foreigner read Gentile, court of the Gentiles, let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, the Lord will surely separate me from his people.

Nor let the eunuch say, behold, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who kept my Sabbaths, and choose what pleases me, and hold fast my covenant.

[37 : 25] To them I will give in my house and within my walls a memorial. And a name better than that of sons and daughters.

So, the Lord is talking here of his open heart and ministry to Gentiles and outcasts like eunuchs and saying, when they come into my house because they want to do my things, I will give them a name that is superior to sons and daughters.

So it's no wonder he's mad that they filled it with animals and dung. Carrying on in verse 5, I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, Gentiles, not the eunuchs, but the Gentiles, to minister to him and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, everyone who keep from profaning the Sabbath and hold fast my covenant, even those I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

So, by quoting that scripture, he is rubbing their nose in the fact that they are demeaning God and being blasphemous and corrupt and evil in what they're doing.

[38 : 54] The second part of the quotation comes from Jeremiah 7, verse 11. So if we turn a book to the right, Jeremiah 7 and verse 11.

So the Lord is speaking through the prophet Jeremiah and he's saying, has this house which is called by my name, temple, tabernacle, become a den of robbers in your sight?

Behold, I, even I, have seen it, declares the Lord. So he's quoting back to Jeremiah to remind them of what happened when Jeremiah said this and to get that you have to read on a bit.

So he says this in verse 12. But go now to my place which was in Shiloh where I made my name dwell at the first and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel.

And now because you have done all these things, declares the Lord, and I spoke to you rising up early and speaking but you did not hear and I called you but you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name in which you trust and to the place which I gave you and to your fathers as I did to Shiloh.

[40 : 21] What did he do to Shiloh? I'll leave you to go back and study what Joe and Tony taught in the books of Samuel but if you go to 1 Samuel chapter 3 you will find out what God did to Shiloh which was he destroyed it and particularly the people who usurp their position and use the house of God for immorality and extortion Phineas and Hockney plus their dad who let them do it.

So what he's done in using these scriptures is he said to the Jews you're going to finish up in exactly the same place that Phineas and Hockney did because you've done exactly you've failed to take account of the fact that I want to meet my people in my temple and bless them and you have mistreated them and committed extortion and all sorts of immoral stuff against them.

So it was a stark and dire warning for those people. What we then read in Matthew is that in verse 14 the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them.

So he got all the clutter out of there the animals have gone the people have been shepherded out and then the blind and the lame came to him and he healed them. So what he's doing here in front of all the people all the people who were getting paid for what was going on in the bazaars and everything that's all gone that can't happen anymore and then he's healing people in the court of the Gentiles and in doing so he's fulfilling Isaiah 35 and verse 6 you can look it up when you get home but it's a messianic prophecy that says the lame will walk the blind will see and the deaf will hear as a result of his coming.

So very very publicly he's doing this and the result is says when the chief priests and the scribes this is verse 15 when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he had done and the children who were shouting in the temple Hosanna to the son of David they became indignant.

[42 : 51] A completely inappropriate response the Lord shows up and does miracles in your midst and you become indignant. They had been teaching the people for years to expect this day and one of the outcomes of this day was that Jesus would perform these messianic miracles and when he does it they get indignant.

Now I suspect they weren't indignant about miracles they were indignant about the loss of income that's my suspicion but in any event they've got their noses put out of joint because the man who has turned up is the greatest high priest there has ever been and he's doing the job that they should have been doing.

He's caring and compassionate for the people and they should have been crying out to God for the healing of these people whereas God was actually in their midst and he simply healed them. so they say do you hear what these children are saying of course you had adults who were praising God and all the children started up as well and they're all calling out Hosanna Lord save Lord save Lord save us son of David a title of Messiah they've clocked it they realize they're in the presence of Messiah and the response of the priests who were supposed to be leading in this is indignation it's an awful travesty and he says in verse 16 have you never read out of the mouths of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise for yourself it's a quote from Psalm 8 read the psalm when you get home it's a psalm that magnifies the

Lord it recognizes his greatness and the wonders of his power and contrasts the Lord with the weakness of men in one account it says if these children don't cry out the rocks themselves will cry out now this is not meant for us to stand around waiting for the rocks to start singing what it is it's an idiom that says what's happening is so obvious that even the rocks understand it it's even understood by an inanimate object that these children are seeing what you refuse to see and I think one of the things we need to not lose sight of is that this ignorance that they are expressing was not true ignorance it was willful ignorance we are not going to accept this man because he's taking away our income he's going to show us up so we reject him and God could of course make the rocks sing if he wanted to

[46 : 05] I'm not doubting that but I suspect what's in play here is he's saying this is so obvious and yet still you ignore it the children understand it and you say that you don't it's willful ignorance God was in their midst and they refused to recognize him and the last sentence reflects a somewhat tragic loss it says and he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there if he had been received well he may well have stayed in the city but he went to where people wanted him which was to Bethany where his friends Lazarus and Mary and Martha lived I want to finish with I hope some points of application and I'm going to go through these quite quickly but remember there is a direct analogy between us and the temple we are said to be the temple of the Holy Spirit so I would say that if there are things in this temple and for those who can't see me because they're listening to this rather than seeing it I'm pointing to myself if there are things in this temple that shouldn't be there I need to be ready to let the

Lord overturn it all and get rid of it so that what should be taking place here can happen prayer and praise and worship and study the word so we need to be strict about what we allow into these temples so many things can clutter our temples and when you really boil it down you have to ask do they matter as much no they don't we need to recognize when God is showing himself to us and desire that he remains however uncomfortable it is I remember a day when God showed me I was a young Christian and somebody said that I had a problem with pride and I said no I don't but over the next few days God showed me I had an awful problem with pride but I also had a choice I could carry on being proud or I could say I don't want to be this kind of man and I could let him deal with my pride he's still dealing with it I have to say we should also learn from the passage we read that God's word is true we've got two groups of people here we've got a bunch of children who realized who Jesus was and grasped him and exalted him and another group who were willfully ignorant because they had other priorities whichever camp you're in the word of God is true so you can either submit to it and be blessed or you can fight against it and be accursed so we need to keep our eye on which way we're pulling I suppose I want to say we need to be pulling in his direction he needs to be our top priority and this is if you remember Jesus was asked what's the greatest commandment and he said to love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind strength and mind mind and strength Deuteronomy 6 verse 5 and it's reiterated by Jesus in Matthew 22 verses 37 to 40 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your might which means he has to be first and that's not it's not

I need to just add this caveat it doesn't affect your salvation if you fail to do this but it does affect your walk with him and how blessed you are in this life the more you can bring him to the top and push other things down the more blessed you will be father thank you so much for this word it's been an honour and a privilege to study it together and I pray that the lessons of it would be writ

large on our hearts father I pray that everyone here has a fantastic week but that you are the very centre of their focus throughout the whole week we thank you Lord that we live in answered prayer it's answered prayer that Ruth and her family are here today it's answered prayer that Angela got her job and that she's here today to testify about that Lord as we pray to you you do answer us but Lord change our hearts so that we want to cry out to you more in Jesus name Amen