

MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

MATTHEW 21:12-13 • TV124A

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Matthew 21:12-13

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

I want you to turn in your Bible today to the book of **Matthew chapter 21**. I’m going to read **verses 12 and 13**.

Now, the title of this message is: **“MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER.”**

The Scripture says in **Matthew 21:12**: *“And Jesus went into the temple of God and cast out all them that bought and sold in the temple and overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of them that sold doves and said unto them: it is written; my house shall be called a house of prayer but you have made it a den of thieves.”*

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ had come to Jerusalem. He told His disciples He had come there to *“suffer and to die.”* He said: *“The Son of man must go to Jerusalem and suffer and die. He would rise again the third day.”*

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And in fulfillment of a Scripture in **Zechariah chapter 9:9** the Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, *“That Scripture might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet behold the King cometh, unto thee meek and lowly, sitting upon an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on this donkey and the people began to cry: *“Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna to the Son of David.”*

And they began to put their clothes in front of him and they began to cast palm branches on the street in front of the donkey He was riding. As He rode into town, the Scripture says, *“When he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, (stirred) saying, who is this? And the multitude said, this is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”*

Now, the next verse says: *“And Jesus went into the temple of God.”* When He came unto Jerusalem and all the people began to cry *“hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”* and the whole city was moved and stirred, one would think that the Lord Jesus Christ would go to the tower of David, to the stronghold of Zion and set up some kind of kingdom.

This is what the Jews wanted, this is what His disciples wanted and this is what many people wanted. But, our Lord’s kingdom is not of this world. *“Our Lord’s kingdom is not meat and drink; it’s righteousness and peace.”*

Christ sets up His reign in the hearts of men. He did not go to the tower of David. He did not go to the stronghold of Israel. He did not come to set up an earthly kingdom. Our Lord, the Scripture says, *“went to the temple of God.”*

Someone else says: *“Why didn’t he go to the headquarters of the Roman government and demand what is His? He has all authority in heaven and earth. Every man is under His Lordship. Everything belongs to God.”*

I hear a lot of that today. Everything belongs to Christ. *“Let’s Christians rise up and take what belongs to our Lord.”* But, our Master did not come to set up an earthly kingdom!

It did not say that He went to the tower of David. It did not say that He went to the Roman government headquarters. It says: *“He went to the temple of God.”*

David worshipped God; *“worship him in spirit and truth.”* God is Spirit and God will be worshipped by those who worship Him in spirit and truth. David said: *“I was glad when they said unto me: let us go into the house of the Lord.”* And again, he said: *“I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.”*

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So, here the Master is, coming into Jerusalem. His mission is to purchase a people by way of the cross. His mission is to set up a kingdom but that kingdom is set up by way of a cross. Our Lord came to the crown by way of the cross.

And He comes into Jerusalem and the people cry *“hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. And the city is moved (and stirred) and all the people cry: who is this, who is this?”*

Christ dismounted and walked over to the temple of God and as He came into the temple of God He stood and surveyed all that He saw. When I read this Scripture I thought of our day, **1980**.

The Master comes into the temple and He stands and surveys all the activities. It was the Passover Feast. It was a special, religious ceremony. It was a special time when people were there from everywhere.

And our Lord looked over the people there, looked over their activities and He saw *“those who bought and sold in the temple.”* In other words, during this special religious feast, the Passover, they had set up booths. They had booths all over the temple of God. There they sold trinkets and there they sold souvenirs. And there they sold sheep and goats and lambs and all manner of things.

It was a special time. It was a time of ceremony; it was a time of much religious activity. These men bought and sold. They had turned the temple of God into a regular place of merchandise.

Then, over here in another place, our Lord saw the money changer. If you will read the book of **Exodus** you will find that every Israelite over 20 years of age, (every male Israelite, I believe) over 20 years of age was required to bring to the temple, every year at the Passover, a half shekel.

Now, these people were from different countries. They had different types of money. They had different exchanges. So, when they came to the temple, most of them they didn't have a half shekel. That's what was required. So, these money changers saw an opportunity to make some money by exchanging money and they would always exchange it so they could get a cut.

You see; everything about their religious activity has something to do with profit, has something to do with gain. Paul called them: *“making merchandise of the souls of men.”* He called them, “religious hucksters.”

Here they were sitting around in their booths and they were changing money. People would come to their booths and give them a certain amount of money and they would exchange it for the shekels but they would keep back a little bit for themselves; they were prosperous hucksters.

There were those who bought and sold. They had souvenirs and gimmicks and trinkets and all manner of paraphernalia. They (the money changers) had all manner of religious things representing the Passover and all of these things.

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Then, there were those who bought and sold doves. The dove was the poor man's sacrifice. The dove was a sacrifice of the poor people. In other words, women in certain times of their lives had to bring a sacrifice and the poor women brought doves. When a child was born they would bring doves, turtledoves. This was the poor person's sacrifice.

These religious hucksters; they had an eye to everybody and they raised these doves and brought them into the temple of God in cages. They had them there waiting for these poor people who came in with their little mite, their small amount of money. They had to have a dove and these fellows had it ready to sell to them.

As our Lord stood and looked over this activity, this religious activity, He grew angry. He stood there *"and platted a whip out of small chords,"* the Scripture says, as He looked at the money changers, those who bought and sold doves and those who bought and sold trinkets and souvenirs and had commercialized the house of God and made it a place of frivolity and made it a place of profit and made it a place of nothing but gain.

As He platted that whip our Lord Jesus Christ's eyes pierced the activities of these people and He came among them and the Scripture says: *"he turned over the tables of the money changers. He emptied the cages of the doves and drove out the sheep, the goats, and drove out those that bought and sold and cried out, my house shall be called a house of prayer but you have made it a den of thieves.* They had commercialized the House of God.

My friend, is this not **1980**? Is this not true of the day in which we live? Have we not commercialized the House of God? Is the church today truly a house of prayer and preaching and worship? Or is the church today a place of big business, entertainment, profit and frivolity? You know that this is true.

Can you imagine, can you imagine the apostle Paul, Peter, James, or John, after the evening service, meeting in the church recreation hall and playing a game of musical chairs or perhaps a game of charade or any type of activity or entertainment like that in the House of the Lord? Can you imagine the apostles doing such nonsense?

Can you imagine the early church bringing into the church a ventriloquist or perhaps a puppet show to entertain the people? Can you in your wildest imagination, can you even think that the apostle Paul, Peter, James, or John, or our Master, would have anything to do with this type of activity?

Can you imagine the apostles giving prizes to people for attending the House of God? Can you imagine those giving prizes to people who brought the most folks to hear the Gospel or perhaps a prize to the person who "wins the most souls to Jesus?"

Can you, can you in your wildest dreams, even conceive of such a thing? You say: "Well; I'm afraid I can't." I can't either but that's what's going on today. That's what we have turned the

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House of God into, commercialization, prophet, big business, entertainment, frivolity, and all of this foolishness.

Let me ask you this, can you imagine the early church building a gym to play basketball games against other churches or perhaps challenging the Roman soldiers to a game of ball?

Can you imagine the apostles calling in a bonding company? Peter, James, and John realize that the church needs a building to worship, in which to worship, in which to preach the Gospel.

Can you imagine them calling in a bonding company from Rome, a group of businessmen from the city of Rome to help them raise money to build a temple for the glory of God? Can you imagine such a thing? That's what we do today.

Can you imagine Paul, can you imagine Paul preaching the Gospel and offering to the people, that if they will send him an offering of \$10.00 he will send them a record of John Mark singing religious songs or perhaps Paul will send them his life story?

Now, can you imagine doing that or maybe an 8 x 10 photograph of him? Can you imagine the apostle Paul selling candy door to door to support the Gospel or perhaps having a chariot wash, or perhaps playing Bingo down in the church basement to support the House of God? Can you imagine that?

Can you imagine these men of God trying to have a record attendance some Sunday in competition with other churches to show that we are getting the job done? "Let's see if we can have a little more Sunday than we had last Sunday, a little more this Sunday than we had a Sunday a year ago."

That's what is going on today. Our Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, came into the temple and this is what He saw. He saw business being transacted. He saw buying and selling. He saw entertainment. He saw frivolity.

He saw souvenirs and gimmicks and trinkets and all manner of things. He saw men taking advantage of other men for gain. And you think religion today is not big business? You don't think men aren't building monuments to themselves?

I will tell you, this ambition for recognition, this ambition for numbers, this ambition for praise, this ambition for fame, has led to entertainment and entertainment has led to sensationalism.

Someone asked me the other day: "What on earth are they going to do next?" This sensationalism leads to the outrageous. That's where we are, the outrageous and the outrageous leads to blasphemy and that's the next step.

We have gone from unbridled ambition, recognition to get ahead of the other fellow, to appear to be a little bigger, a little more important, to reach more numbers. We've gone from this evil

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ambition to sensationalism and from sensationalism we've gone to the outrageous and we are right on the verge of sheer blasphemy.

Preachers today have become foolish promoters. The church today, to most men, is nothing in the world but a laughing stock. And I will tell you what's happened; the Gospel's gone out the window but it always does when frivolity comes in the Gospel goes out. When entertainment comes in, the Gospel goes out. When our motive becomes anything other than the glory of God, the Gospel goes out the window.

Our Lord stands today and surveys the church as we know it and I believe He's plating a cord, a whip of cords, and He is saying, as He will say in that day, "*you've made my house a den of thieves; my house shall be called a house of prayer* (but you've turned it into a place of merchandise, a place of entertainment, a place of commercialism). *you've made it a den of thieves.*"

What shall we do preacher? Let me give you five things:

First of all: It's high time to rid the church of the Lord Jesus Christ of thieves, money changers, souvenir sellers and hucksters!

If you can't drive them out, the thing for you to do is get out yourself. Someone said: "When the old well becomes choked and you can't clean it out, go dig another well." That's what **Peter** said on Pentecost; he cried out, "*Men, brethren; save yourselves from this perverse generation.*" They have departed from the living God; deliver yourself from this perverse generation.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 5:11:** "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them.*"

Those who promote and keep company with and support religious thieves and hucksters and merchandisers of men's soul will share their condemnation.

Charles Spurgeon for many years was pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England, almost 38 years. He had one of the greatest ministries out of the Gospel of any man of my knowledge, clear back to the apostle Paul.

I suppose Spurgeon was one of the greatest preachers since Paul the apostle. And he had this to say even 120 years ago; this is what he said: "I do not hope to reform the world or the church. I do not expect to convert the world to righteousness or the church to orthodoxy this is beyond me; it's too late, it's gone too far. But, I will use my power and my influence for some object within my own reach. If I cannot destroy all the thorns that curse the earth, and I can't, perhaps I can cleanse my own garden. If I cannot transform the desert into a pasture, and I can't, perhaps I can make two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before."

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“Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing: What fellowship hath darkness with light? What fellowship hath Bail with the temple of God?”

Our Lord Jesus Christ looks at this generation and I’m sure that He looks at it just like He was looking at that religious generation when He was here on this earth and watching all their frivolities and entertainment and commercialism and there making merchandise of the souls of men.

He said: *You’ve made my house a den of thieves (you have perverted my house). My house shall be called the house of prayer.”* And He turned over their money tables and released their sheep, goats, and doves.”

Second: Let’s rid the church of the thieves and hucksters and it’s time to rediscover the Bible!

There’s an interesting story I’d like for you to read over in **2 Kings chapter 22**. Israel had been in darkness and idolatry so long under pagan and evil kings. The temple of God had grown up with weeds and dirt.

The ceremonies had been forgotten; the preaching of the Word forgotten. The reading of the Word forgotten and the offering of sacrifices forgotten. The temple was broken down in ruins.

King Josiah came to power and King Josiah ordered the priest Hilkiah and Shaphan the Scribe to get some men and clean out the temple of God. He said: “It’s time to restore the worship of the Lord. It’s time to get back to God. It’s time to return to seeking after the Lord. Clean out the temple and restore the worship.” So, they began to clean out the temple.

You need to read this, **2 Kings; chapter 22:** They began to clean out the temple and while they cleaned out the temple Hilkiah the priest found a Book. It was the **Book of Moses**. It was the writings of Moses and it was the Word of God.

Hilkiah read this Book. He had never read it before. He was the priest but he had never read the Bible. Shaphan the Scribe hadn’t seen a copy of Moses writings. He read it and he was so alarmed.

He took it to Shaphan and Shaphan took it to the king Josiah and read it to him. This is what Josiah said as he rent his clothing and as he wept before the scribe, Shaphan; he said this:

“Go ye and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people concerning the words of this book for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us because our fathers have departed from this book. They have not harkened unto the words of this book.”

Is that not our day? Oh, we know all the little religious clichés. We know all the fundamentalism and the prophecies and all of the things of that sort. But, people today are so ignorant of the

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Word of God, what God's Word says about Himself, the attributes of God, the glory of God, and the redemptive glory of God.

They know so little about the fall, about righteousness. They know so little about substitution and redemption. They know so little about God's sovereignty. They know so little about the Word of God or the facts of the Bible.

Many men know but the mystery and the truth and the way of redemption, they know so little. It's time to rediscover the Book. It's time not only to clean out the House of God but to restore the Bible to its rightful place.

It's time to lay aside tradition and ceremonies and human literature. It's time to lay aside the programs and promotions and get out of the numbers business and the numbers racket and return to preaching the Word of God.

Thirdly: It's time to restore preaching to its proper place!

I was listening to a man not long ago and his program, he had an hour program and he went through about 40 minutes. He said: "My, my, as he looked at his watch and he said we've had so much fun and had so much good singing and we've had so much good entertainment and testimonies that we don't have time to preach."

My friend; let me tell you something, that's what's happened to us. We need to return to the preaching of the Word of God. That's what the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built on, the preaching of the Word.

When our Lord began His public ministry; what does the Bible say? "*He began to preach, he began to preach.*" John the Baptist; what does the Scripture say about him? "*He came preaching. John the Baptist came preaching.*"

When our Lord went back to glory, ascended back to the Father to the right hand of God and left the commission with His disciples, what did he say to them? "Go ye into all the world; get your quartet or choir and entertain people." No, He said: "*go and preach the gospel, preach the gospel. God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*"

I will tell you my friend; it's time to turn again to the preaching of the Word of God. You cannot build a church on Sunday school. You cannot build a church on singing. You cannot build a church on social activities; you can only build the church of the Lord Jesus Christ on the preaching of the Word of God: "*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*"

Growth in grace comes by hearing the Word of God. "*Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.*" Christ is revealed in the Word. Sin is revealed in the Word. God's grace is revealed in the Word, everything in the Word of God.

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God says: *“I will bless my word. My word will not return unto me void. It shall accomplish that whereunto I have sent it.”* We have departed from preaching the Word of God.

Fourthly: It’s time to recover the Gospel of God’s grace!

A French king called in one of his servants one day to inquire about a certain preacher in the village. When he called him in he said: “why is this pastor so popular?” The servant replied: “My lord; he preaches the Gospel; that’s a rare thing in France, a rare thing.”

I hear people talking all the time about organizing these different programs and getting all this money to send the Gospel around the world. I never hear these fellows preach the Gospel.

I hear them talking all the time about healing but healing is not the Gospel. I hear them all the time talking about God blessing you financially but that’s not the Gospel.

My friends; I can be healthy of body and be damned in my soul. I can be rich in finances and poor in spirit. I need salvation. I need the forgiveness of sin.

I heard someone the other day talking about how God’s blessed us; they said: “we’ve got houses, cars, washers and dryers, telephones and bank accounts,” and not one time did this person mention the forgiveness of sin.

The apostle Paul says: *“I know how to be abased and I know how to abound.”* He says: *“I have learned to be content that whatsoever state God puts me in.”* It doesn’t matter whether I have prosperity or poverty, I need Christ, I need forgiveness, I need mercy, I need my sins pardoned, I need eternal life, and I need salvation.

That’s what men need, the Gospel; it’s time to return to preaching the Gospel. Let’s quit preaching health and wealth and finances and happiness and these things in the flesh. We need to preach what God does for a sinner through Christ, the Gospel of His grace, the Gospel of His righteousness, the Gospel of His glory, the Gospel of His dear Son *“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin, through the blood of his cross.”*

The apostle Paul said: *“Brethren; I’m not ashamed of the gospel. It’s the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

I will tell you; God’s purpose for this world is not just to make us healthy and wealthy and wise. God’s purpose through Jesus Christ is to save a people for His glory. *“This is a faithful saying, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.”*

You would be better off with patches on your pants and the joy of Christ in your heart than living in a mansion with all the blessings of the flesh and miss Christ Jesus. You would be better off if men never knew you and your name were never mentioned among men, if your name was mentioned in heaven.

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Christ said: *“Don’t rejoice that the demons are subject unto you. Rejoice that your names are written in the book of life.”* It’s time to return unto the Lord. It’s time to return to the Lord.

Joshua said: *“Choose you this day whom you will serve, the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord God!”*