Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Den Of Robbers By Selling? No!!!**

**Luke 19:41-48 & Jer. 7:1-11**

Trinity X – August 19, 2020

Jesus goes into the temple and he drives out those who sold saying to them, “It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers.” At first glance, it appears that Jesus is upset because there is buying and selling going on in the temple

Matthew gives a bit more detail than does Luke, he records the event in this manner.

*And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matt. 21:12-13)*

It does appear that there was some sort of an abuse going on. We have heard plenty of sermons – in fact, I have preached my share – in which the focus is upon the fact that they system in the temple had become abusive and people were being ripped off. This is indeed true.

Yes, the system was incredibly corrupt. It had probably begun as a nice sounding idea. Maybe it went like this at a congregational meeting, “People come to temple for sacrifice from way out of town, bringing a sacrificial animal is an inconvenience. Hey, what if we set up a system right here at the temple to provide animals so people travel without having to worry about keeping it free from blemish in their travels?” Who wouldn’t approve that?

Of course, their hatred of all goyim – all Gentiles created a different problem. There was a prejudice against any currency that was not Jewish. So, Gentile money was not acceptable to purchase animals that the temple sold. This is why the currency exchange for temple coin was developed, in order to buy animals for sacrifice.

Two problems grew from this. First, the currency exchange rate was greatly inflated. Secondly, the cost for these animals was way out of proportion to normal costs. The money-changers and those who sold animals made exorbitant profit – the priests and leaders – those who were to be spiritual caregivers used the church to line their own pockets.

The temple had become incredibly corrupt. This is not how it should have been at all.

But there is so much more here than that. In fact, understanding the actions of Jesus simply as about the monetary injustice is to barely scratch the surface.

Jesus is addressing something even more important than simply talking about money. God enfleshed is taking out Divine wrath against the abuse of His Father’s house. Temple is where you were to come in order to have that which is unclean, made clean, the unholy, made holy. Temple is about freeing sinners from their bondage to sin, and the salvation of souls.

And right now you are thinking, but Jesus said, “"It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers.” Surely those words are clear, He is talking about money?

Really?

Yes, He spoke of “a den of robbers.”

But, did Jesus say a word about money?

Yes, He overturned the tables of the money changers.

Yes, He overturned the tables of those who sold pigeons.

BUT… Did He mention anything about money?

Jesus is fulfilling the Scripture He is quoting, the Scripture recorded by the prophet Jeremiah as our Old Testament lesson, hear it again.

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'*

*"For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.*

*"Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord. (Jer. 7:1-11)*

It is God who defines how His temple is made into a den of robbers, and He does so quite clearly.

People were not amending their ways and deeds. They were simply trusting in phrase, “This the temple of the Lord.”

People thought that they could come into God’s temple and receive forgiveness, even while intending to go out and continue in the same sins for which they had come to receive God’s gracious mercy. In this manner people were making His temple a den of robbers.

They were not only to make the required sacrifice to atone for their sin, but they were to amend their ways and their deeds. They made the required sacrifice to pay for their sin, but as they were presenting the sacrifice, they had every intention of continuing again in the same sin. God declares this is how His temple becomes a den of robbers.

Now comes Jesus, God incarnate – God in human flesh – as the one time, atoning for all sin, sacrifice. He comes into His temple and there are two manners in which God’s house is being made a den of robbers.

First, the mediators between God and man are more concerned with lining their pockets than in spiritual care of souls, making God’s house a den of robbers.

Secondly are those who are doing the buying – they too are robbers. They have not done the work to bring in the requisite sacrifice. They did not raise the animal, feed the animal, keep the animal safe, and thereby understand the seriousness of their sin. They had no true remorse for their sins in their heart.

They could buy the sacrifice at the temple and just go through the motions. They could show up, buy the sacrificial animal, let the priest make the sacrifice, and then walk away. It was easily done and they could return to life as normal, even as they planned to return to doing the same sin. They made God’s house a den of robbers.

Why did you show up today? Is it because it is the day of worship, and that’s what you do? It is your ritual? You come to do your part and hope that it is enough? But you have no intention of truly changing your life. If the truth be told, you really do not think you are that bad a sinner! If so, you have made this house of God a den of robbers?

That is what Jesus is addressing that day in our text. At the beginning of our text Jesus is weeping over Jerusalem because they did not know the time of their visitation. God is visiting them with His salvation! He set up the whole sacrificial system to lead them to see the seriousness of their sin and grant them peace of heart and mind as they left to lead better lives. Every time they went to temple, God visited them with salvation.

This whole sacrificial system pointed forward to, and was a foreshadowing, of Christ’s coming – God’s redemption – God making the sacrifice for man’s sin. Christ is the One to whom they are united, that He might live in them, giving them a new life amended in His way and deed.

Christ gave His life that those who gather in His house receive the benefits of His sacrifice. He makes His dwelling within them as they hear His Word of forgiveness proclaimed – as the sacrifice is applied to them – and they are strengthened for a new and amended life.

He comes to them with His flesh to eat, the very bread of life, a newly amended life lived in them.

His blood is true drink, and by it Christ abides in those who drink, and they abide in Him – in His perfect life lived in and through them.

You are here because the weight of your sin is a burden. You know what you should be doing – and what you should not be doing – but you have failed, you have sinned, and the guilt weighs heavy on your heart and soul. You have come to this place for you know what you deserve from God. You come to this house for here is where God is merciful, His lovingkindness endures to all generations. You know God gave His Son – for you!

You have come to receive forgiveness, life, and salvation – to receive the benefits of the Once-for-all-sacrifice made by the Son of God when He shed His blood unto death upon the cross.

You have come because you know that of your own you cannot amend your ways and your deeds of your own, that sinfulness in your life would just continue unabated. You come because you want your faith to be fed and nourished. You come because without Word and Sacrament you are lost in trespasses and sins.

Let it be done to you as you believe! This is the hospital for sin-sick souls. Here is dispensed the medicine of immortality. All has been paid in full by the very Lamb of God!

Hear! Eat! Drink! Be refreshed and renewed in Christ!

In His house, God amends you in forgiveness for life everlasting and for today – your ways and your deeds.

Rejoice and be glad in that. Amen.