**Seeking To Destroy Jesus**

**Luke 19:41-48**

Trinity X – 08.21.2022

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

In our text, Jesus entered the temple and drove 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."

And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

Why? Why were the chief priests, scribes, and principal men seeking to destroy Him? What was the problem?

These were the leading men, collectively they were called the Sanhedrin. They had set up all sorts of rules that they felt would help people keep “the Law.” These rules were set up to make God’s law attainable, that it would be able to be done by people. All these rules however were only things that were outwardly observable.

Along comes Jesus! Jesus declares – and with surprising authority – that God’s law, as handed down from Moses, was not intended to have more rules attached to it. Also, it was not to be used to give the impression that people could accomplish them – in an outwardly appearing fashion.

With authority Jesus was teaching – He was casting out demons and healing many who had different physical ailments. In His teaching concerning the Torah He showed that God’s intent for living in it was deeper than they liked to teach! It is not just about an outward keeping of the law; it is a matter of the heart.

Jesus taught that keeping Torah is not simply down outwardly. Even more, you can break Torah not only by what you do, but also by what you fail to do. When we fail to love God and our neighbor we are also breaking the Law. In regard to doing what we should not be doing, Jesus declares that hearts and thoughts must also be kept pure. Matters of the heart and mind are as sinful as outward violations of the law.

But Jesus went even further, He proclaimed forgiveness. He exhibited His authority to do so by healing! Even more, by that authority, H dispensed forgiveness to more than those who had minor infractions against the law. Christ proclaimed to even the most vile sinners that they were forgiven.

The Sanhedrin could not possibly tolerate this. Jesus’ teaching would destroy everything that they did. Their whole religious system would collapse. They would not be able to make money by exchanging currency and selling sacrificial animals at outrageous prices, making obscene profit. AND, forgiveness was being dispensed for free.

Perhaps the worst consequence to Jesus’ teaching was that these church leaders were finally seen as the sinners they were, no better or worse than those thought of as the most vile sinners. They too were sinners in their hearts and minds.

Repentance was required of all! Not just coming and going through the rituals, which is what the more serious problem was with the selling of animals and the currency exchange at the temple. There was no repentant preparation to the sacrifice. Their was no sorrow over sin! People could come, buy their sacrificial animal, do their duty, head home, and continue in their same sinful behaviors.

If people were to truly come to repentance – sorrowing over their sin and desiring to do better, trusting in this free forgiveness – they were doomed!

To have this itinerant, non-establishment preacher, point this out to the whole world could not be tolerated! So, they were seeking to destroy Jesus.

But let’s not get too far ahead of ourselves. Why was Jesus at this place and point in time? Why was He where we find Him in our text?

Because this was all according to plan. This was all according to God’s eternal plan.

God gave the Law through Moses in order that the promise given earlier might be all the more evident. The Law was given so that sin might become utterly sinful. Jesus comes and points out the severity of the Law in order that people might come to fully understand their depravity. In a true understanding of their hopelessness in sinfulness before God, God’s full plan could be revealed.

God’s plan is to bring salvation to the human race – in Jesus Christ. All men are sinners – fully and completely. Man cannot save Himself! It is why later in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus responds to a young ruler’s question by asking, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”

Every inclination of mankind’s heart wants to believe they are good. There was confusion about that in the church leadership of Jesus’ day, and there is confusion about it today. They wanted to save their place, their standing in society, so they were seeking to destroy Jesus.

God’s Christ came for a singular purpose, He came that they might kill Him. It was God’s plan that He come at this particular time to Jerusalem. These leaders – chief priests, scribes, and principal men of the people thought they were seeking to destroy Jesus for their own purpose. However, these are those whom God foreknew would seek to destroy Jesus. It was God’s plan that the fullness of time would come when they would accomplish His plan.

It was God’s plan to use the vile wickedness of their hearts to be His instruments to bring about the salvation of all. They meant it for evil, but God used it for good.

Are you also seeking to destroy Jesus? Do you try to get right with God on your own? Do you believe that repentance is your work? Do you believe that your repentance is an offering, your sacrifice for your sinfulness?

Do you seek to destroy Jesus by watering down the law so that it is attainable, in order to appear good before men? Or at least to appear good in your own mind?

Or maybe you seek to destroy Jesus by claiming you are not able to be forgiven? You seek to destroy Jesus by believing your sinfulness needs more than just Jesus’ suffering and death – that your own accomplishments are also necessary? That Jesus work needs your doing it better? Your doing it right? Your better repentance?

Are you also seeking to destroy Jesus, by believing that if you receive His Body and Blood in the sacrament too often makes the sacrament meaningless? Do you think that your receiving it frequently there it is less His flesh and blood you receive? Or that it somehow contains less forgiveness? Less salvation? Or that it is less than eternal life that is dispensed?

All these are ways You seek to destroy Jesus. No, you do not seek to kill Him, to take His life. In fact, you and I confess that He is God, that He did indeed die for us.

But, when we try to take credit for things that only God does and can do, we are pointing to ourselves. Pointing to self is seeking to destroy Jesus and His work for us. When we diminish the greatness of God’s gifts, when we believe they are just a Sunday thing and do not change our whole life, we are seeking to destroy Jesus.

God gave His Son to purchase forgiveness, and gives Him to us still to grant us salvation and eternal life. Christ comes to us with amazing gifts.

This is God’s house, Christ is present. Here we offer our prayers of faith.

We repentantly pray for forgiveness – Christ hears us and answers in the affirmative, delivering the forgiveness He purchased into our ears.

We pray for mercy – Christ hears us and speaks gracious words of life into our hearts.

We pray for Him to feed us – Christ hears us and gives us holy food, His flesh and His blood.

We pray our confession of faith – and what we believe is here done unto us.

Dear friends, be those who are hanging on Jesus’ words. And in them, as He has promised, you have life eternal. Amen.