

Jesus clears the temple

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[0:00] Morning, everyone. Right, anybody who's been before when I've preached, it's not just because there's a motorcycle.

It's because a number of us in this church are involved in taking the gospel message to motorcyclists, which is also worldwide. So, let's start with John chapter 2, verse 13 to 22.

And this is the occasion when Jesus cleanses or clears out the temple. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

He found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So, he made a whip of cords and...

Oh, that was a bit pathetic. Try that again later. Both sheep and cattle... ..and overturned their tables.

[1:24] To those who sold doves, he said, Get these out of here. Stop turning my father's house into the market. His disciples remembered that it's written, Zeal for your house will consume me.

Jesus said, What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? Jesus answered them. To destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.

They replied, It's taken 46 years to build this temple, and you're going to raise it in three days? For the temple he has spoken of was his glory.

As you know, Jesus rose from the dead after three days. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believe the scripture and the words that Jesus has told you.

Thank you so much. Okay. I just want to thank the church that's been praying for Sandy and I and others in CMA, because a number of people have passed into glory, which is wonderful, but it's a burden because they're such precious friends of ours that we've known for many, many years.

[2:39] But last week, Sandy and I took a trip down to Northampton to attend the Thanksgiving service. The funeral had already taken place. Thanksgiving service or memorial for a very special friend of ours called Mike Sharp.

Mike Sharp, when he passed away, was 87 years old. For 60 years, Mike had shared the gospel with people who were involved in the vintage and classic motorcycle community, plus also classic motor car community as well.

He was passionate. He knew Jesus, and he wanted everybody else to know. Let's face it, if we know Jesus, why wouldn't we want to tell anybody else? But every year, we had a very special time with Mike.

I would see him at other events like Mallory Park and so on, but on one occasion every year, the whole of the vintage motorcycle club used to come to Oliver's Mount at Scarborough, not when the racing was on, but just to have a big camp.

And part of their weekend was to do a 100-mile tour of the North Yorkshire moors on bikes that were anything from 1920 onwards.

[3:49] The wonderful thing was they always chose to come to our village at Castleton. But Mike would always ride with a friend called Hugh, who's now 89.

They had matching motorcycles, for anybody who's interested. Ken, red Marini 500cc. And he always went ahead of the ride to come to our house, pre-planned and pre-invited, because Sandy had a big pile of scones, cream and jam on a table in the front garden as they arrived.

And we sat for an hour or two as the 100 bikes went past. But there was a reason why Mike wanted Sandy to make scones.

It was because Hugh would come for the scones, then be in our garden and in our company, because Mike wanted Hugh to find out what God was doing in our lives.

Because Mike, for many years, had told Hugh what God was doing in his. When Mike passed away, he left a tremendous legacy. And I have been to quite a few funerals, and I've got a lot more to come to.

[5:03] But in Mike's in particular, I remember looking across and seeing his sons. Four adult sons who were just wonderful men of God. One of them a minister. But also then, I looked at his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren, and I could see the passion and the sadness in their eyes for their grandfather who'd passed away and been an example of Jesus to them.

And it reminded me that the legacy we are passing on to our children and all those we ever meet, briefly or otherwise, is the life we're living today.

Therefore, live this life well for God. Imagine Mike's heart. If when they'd come for scones, Jesus was never mentioned.

Scones were not important. They taste incredible, and I'm always fighting my weight because of them. But the scones were not the important moment.

And I think, if I'm right, Mike brought Hugh at least four years running. It was incredible. We actually managed to pray. We were able to pray with Hugh because his wife was dying of cancer on one of the occasions he came.

[6:15] And he could see hope in the midst of the situation over a plate of scones. It's wonderful, isn't it? You know, when people are facing the end of their lives on earth, it's either without Christ, therefore hopeless, depressed, and fearful.

I've met a lot of people like that, and my heart goes out to them. But for those who put their hope in Christ, we have not hopelessness, but hopefulness.

And it's not a vague hope. It's an absolute, out-and-out, assured hope of salvation. Death is not the end. It's only the beginning of eternity.

And you know, sometimes we live our lives and we take our focus off that. But one great story, and I do believe John mentioned this many years ago, but I'll share it again. When the Titanic sank, there was one very significant man.

One of many, I'm sure. But this man had an incredible story that relates to him. One man told the story one day about how he found himself struggling to stay afloat in the icy water, near the iceberg that brought ultimately the Titanic to sink.

[7:33] Near him swam the American evangelist, John Harper. He didn't know John Harper. John Harper didn't know him. But John Harper was so passionate for the Lord Jesus Christ in his life, in the midst of this horror, he called out to the man who was nearby, Are you saved?

I wonder, at first, did you think was that the best thing he could have said, as opposed to, I'll teach you how to swim? That wasn't going to work. But John was a man of God who trusted God and knew every moment of his life, that day may be the day he's going to heaven.

So the first thing he wanted to say to this man struggling was, Are you saved? And thankfully, this man didn't question it except to say, No, I'm not saved. And then John said to him, Can you imagine how he said it to him with the cold, freezing water and the waves splashing over him and the desperation and people screaming around him?

John said to him, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And knowing he could not survive long in the icy water, John Harper took off his life jacket and threw it to another person nearby and shouted to him, You need this more than I do.

In other words, I'm going to heaven if I die in this water, but I'm not convinced you are. Moments later, Harper disappeared beneath the water and then met Jesus face to face.

[9:16] Four years later, what a story this is. Four years later, when there was a reunion of the survivors of the Titanic, the man to whom John Harper had witnessed told the story of his rescue and gave a testimony of his conversion, which is recorded in a tract.

And the tract was entitled, I was John Harper's last convert. Wow. See, when John Harper died, he left a legacy, an absolute assured legacy, an example to those who knew him and especially, listen to this, to his daughter who survived the sinking of the Titanic.

He put her in a boat, but there wasn't enough boat space for him or others. That's why he died separate from his daughter. But he left a legacy, and that legacy we equally are passing on to our children and to those we meet, even for a moment, in this life, is the life we're living today. When we became a Christian, everything about us changes. Absolutely everything, and let's face it, if it didn't, it wouldn't be worth it, would it?

I love the fact that the Bible says, 2 Corinthians 5, 17, if anyone becomes a Christian or is in Christ, they are a new creation. And I love the bit where it says, the old is gone, and the new is here.

[10:49] My past is forgiven, my present is secure, and my future is eternal. That's what it's saying. It's a wonderful statement. We no longer want to live by the previous moral standards we did.

Who would? And our new life is a new beginning. But it comes with a huge responsibility, and I'm getting to the passage, don't worry. It comes with a huge responsibility when we say, we've given our lives to Christ, and it's an obligation and accountability to God that we mustn't ignore.

Living a Christ-like life doesn't just happen, yes, we're forgiven, yes, we are saved, but if we do not strive to live a holy life, we can easily fall back into old habits that will be destructive.

Now, to put this in context of the verses we read, let me give you a little bit of background to what was going on that day. The Jewish nation, as we know, and as Simon so wonderfully prayed earlier, was God's chosen people.

And at God's direction, they built a huge temple in Jerusalem. The one location where Jews came to worship God and make sacrifices. So different to today, thankfully, how what we have is so different today.

[12:07] Special occasions like the Passover. This was when Jesus and his disciples went into Jerusalem. When they occurred, people would travel long distances to make sacrifices.

They had to follow a procedure. Some would bring their own lambs. Some lived far away and were not farmers. So instead of bringing their lambs, they expected, next slide please, to buy one when they got to Jerusalem or at least maybe on the streets or in the marketplace nearby.

And many, because they lived in foreign parts, didn't have the right money to actually be able to invest into the temple. So foreign currency wasn't permitted.

Therefore, there had to be money changers. Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem for the Passover. And when they went to the temple, Jesus found to his horror that it was filled with people selling animals for sacrifice and money changers.

In other words, this wasn't right. It wasn't what they were selling that was the issue. What was wrong was where they were selling it and why they were doing it and the motivation behind their actions that caused the problem.

[13:27] There was a marketplace. There was places on the side of the roads as they approached Jerusalem, particularly the temple, where they could sell, but they didn't. They should have been in that marketplace.

Instead, making big money in the temple courts and ripping people off because they were charging inflated prices in a place that was supposed to be holy and kept holy.

Just like our lives. When we become a Christian, the Bible says, we are to be holy as I am holy, God's word says. They defiled the temple by making it a marketplace instead of a house of prayer. And they weren't bothered about God's opinion. Money was their God, undoubtedly. Money, profit, self-inflation, if that's the right word, as opposed to financial inflation.

And you know, this is what actually Zacchaeus did. Remember Zacchaeus up in the tree? He was the money man. He robbed people. He took... But when he actually came to Christ and gave his life to the Lord and saw the holiness of God and how sinful he was, he gave back four times what he took.

[14:46] And who permitted this corruption in the temple courts? Well, of course, the religious leaders. They knew full well that that shouldn't be happening. But no doubt, they were getting plenty of money by virtue of turning a blind eye or even openly admitting these people to do what they could do.

You can't have a market in the temple without their authority. Therefore, they must have given permission. And it's, of course, a clear sign of the religious leaders' lack of respect for God and Jesus couldn't ignore it.

He drove them and their animals out of the temple. Then he overturned their tables and scattered their money in the temple courts. Now, let me make one point very clear.

And I, when we read this story, it spoke of how Jesus made a whip. But there's nothing to say that Jesus whipped the people.

But anybody who's worked on a farm, many of us have, know that a stick or a whip or whatever will get animals moving. He was eager to get them out of the temple courts.

[15:56] He drove them and their animals out. Then he overturned the tables and scattered their money in the temple ground. And I thought, what an interesting similarity that was when Judas betrayed Jesus.

He realized when Jesus was condemned that he had sinned, it wasn't working out the way he anticipated. And he said, I have betrayed innocent blood.

And of course, the religious leaders that have given him the 30 pieces of silver said, what is that to us? That's your responsibility. He'd been taken for a ride and oh, what a desperate situation.

So Judas threw the money onto the temple floor and left. Then he went away and hanged himself because he was so upset by what he did. Next slide, please, Shelley.

You know, money has been such a central element of this story. But let me ask you this. Were you surprised the first time you ever heard this story about the way Jesus responded?

[17:00] I imagine the majority of us were. What? He got angry?

Righteously? He turned tables over? Isn't that a bit of a deal? You know, it's amazing how the world, because we love to reach out to people who don't go to church and so on because we want them to know Jesus.

Isn't it amazing how the world perceives the Jesus they don't believe in? In other words, if we were to sit down with somebody and say, please, tell us. Tell us. Describe Jesus in your perception.

And they may not use the very words, but in effect, it's spineless, soft, gentle. And if you, the fact that he would do this to them would be an absolutely, what?

No, that's not the Jesus I have in my mind when I think of Jesus. If you look at the way in which Jesus or Christians or ministers, thankfully, not like John, but ministers are portrayed on media, particularly TV, comedies and things of that nature.

Just wimpy, spineless individuals. I love Dad's Army. Anybody know who the Reverend Farthing is in Dad's Army? I love this comment.

[18:11] Well, actually, does everybody know the best well-known quote from Dad's Army? Don't tell him Pike. Yes, that one. Well, Reverend Farthing in Dad's Army was standing up to main wearing in a very calm, gentle way.

Mr. Mannering, he said, if you can do your blood-curdling bayonet practice in the middle of my choir responses, I can do my jubilate in the middle of your inquiry. Don't think Jesus would have taken it quite that way.

You know, we really need to tell people about the truth and biblical person of Jesus and incidentally, tell them he's not dead. He is alive and he's coming again.

Jesus is not weak or powerless. He is godly power under control in this situation. In fact, elsewhere in the Bible, Jesus is referred to as the Lion of Judah, not the kitten that some people may have imagined.

Don't imagine that a spineless, wimpy Jesus went to the cross to pay the sin debt for you and I that we owed. Then willingly accept the nails in his hands and feet causing unimaginable agony and then willingly took the sin of the world upon himself, the sin of the whole world, mind you, from beginning of history to the end.

[19:40] And you can imagine some of those people. He took their sin upon himself that caused inconceivable suffering, especially by separating him from his father.

Far worse pain than anything physical. If you want to know what Jesus was like, share that with people. Open their eyes to who he is and why he came, but particularly feel that he's the son of God.

God. And of course, people hadn't picked up on that either. And Jesus did everything with purpose and nothing he did just happened. I do wish I could live my life a little better than that because sometimes I get to the end of the day and things have just happened around me and I wish I'd been more focused on what I should maybe have been doing at that time.

But when we become a Christian, God incredibly and mysteriously places his Holy Spirit within us, that's what it means to be born again of the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 6.19 from the Amplified Bible which just kind of expounds the verse a little bit more. I love the way it says this. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you?

[20:53] Don't forget Jesus was turning tables in the main physical stone built temple in Jerusalem. But here, God is telling us that do you not know that as a Christian your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you whom you have received as a gift from God.

Jesus, before he died, said, and I will leave a counselor, the Holy Spirit who will be with you and in you. When Jesus drove the sellers and money changers out of the temple, he wasn't merely cleansing a temple although that was the major purpose of what he did and how he did it.

But it's a comparison to us between, excuse me, between the physical stone temple built in Jerusalem and the temple of our hearts where the Holy Spirit resides.

You know, God knows that we're sinners and we will sin. But God's word also says when we do sin, he will forgive us if we earnestly repent. So, when we're attempting to live a godly life, take to heart moment by moment that the Holy Spirit lives within us.

Remember the bands that a lot of people used to wear, what would Jesus, yeah, what would Jesus do? I would often want to say if Jesus was sat by you today, what would you do?

[22:24] When you turn on the TV, when we turn on the TV, if we were to say that Jesus was sat there literally, what would our plan be?

Would we even turn the TV on? What would our conversation be? One of the most significant families that helped me when I first became a Christian had this wonderful sort of text thingy on the wall next to their dining room table and it said something like, somebody can probably help me out with this, that Jesus is the unseen guest.

That's it. Could you say that a bit louder, John? Well, the last bit I didn't mean was the unseen listener after every conversation but it's the fifth step That was it. Yes. That's it.

It was such a wonderful thing and it really, you know, I love it when I've seen as a young Christian especially, new things like that, never thought before and at times they even laid a place and it wasn't a joke, it was true.

They're honoring the presence of Jesus as every meal and they were people who even with, I think their kids then would have been about six, seven, eight and nine. At the end of their meal when they'd obviously given thanks, they had the meal, at the end of the meal John would take out the Bible and the first time I was thinking is this dessert?

[23:54] What's next? And he would read a verse and then go around the table to even his young children and say what does that mean to you? It was just the most wonderful, wonderful learning process for me.

So this is a comparison that we mustn't miss between the physical stone temple built in Jerusalem and the temple of our hearts where the Holy Spirit resides. And Jesus at this moment when he cleansed and cleared them out took ownership of the stone temple making himself as the son of God responsible for keeping it as it should be holy.

The religious leaders had the obligation to maintain the table at the temple sorry but they ignored their responsibility and it was a disaster. But equally we have an obligation to maintain our hearts and keep them holy by living a godly life.

Now I don't go for a minute by saying that's easy but that's what we're commanded and called by God to do to live a holy life and not just in our homes not in our church but to support each other and pray for each other and not condemn each other when we get it wrong because we will but just to pick each other up and love and support and hear and be repeated again and again from the front to the church.

Jesus on that day was radical wasn't he? Totally out of expectation and that's not a bad thing. So the radical Jesus those who live a committed life for Christ will have a lifestyle that is radical so different from the world and different from what is usually considered in the world as normal

acceptable and successful because so much in the world is contrary to the Bible and how we're supposed to live.

[25:46] In those days the mess that they had in that temple was a result of the community lowering the standards.

If you look through the biblical background of the Old Testament there were times when they realized the king would realize that the situation was beyond recovery almost and they found the scriptures and then spoke them out into the nation of Israel again and people stood up or fell to their knees in repentance and said we will obey this.

And so should we in the right sense of the word. We need to check the spiritual condition of our hearts on a regular basis. Are we a slave to sin or a servant to righteousness?

We don't like to be called a slave do we? But the Bible says it that we can be a slave to sin because we're not choosing a righteous life and we can't make ourselves righteous but the Bible says God sees us as righteous through faith in Christ.

Being a Christian is much more than inviting Jesus into your heart or asking for forgiveness. That's by all means the start and so so important but it's surrendering to the lordship of Christ.

[27:04] Now when we sang the song Jesus All for Jesus what were we singing those words? All of my ambitions hopes and plans I surrender these into your hands.

That's the lordship of Christ. Doesn't mean that God's going to make your life boring, dull or empty. But he's saying surrender it to me and the adventure you will have trusting me and seeing me work through you and touch lives and change lives will be beyond comprehension.

That's why the Bible calls it that if we ask we can ask anything above anything we could ask or imagine anything we could possibly dream about. But bear in mind the reason we are to surrender to the lordship of Christ is because the light of Christ cannot mix with the darkness of sin.

Righteousness cannot mix with unrighteousness and belief cannot mix with unbelief. And so much more than that. In 1 John chapter 2 verse 15 to 17 it's entitled Do Not Love This World.

It's a fabulous statement here. I haven't got it on the screen but just listen to these words. We're told Do not love this world nor the things it offers you.

[28:32] For when you love the world you do not have the love of the Father in you. This doesn't mean not loving the people who are broken and in the world.

It's the nature of the world that is contrary to God's will. So do not love this world nor the things it offers you. For when you love the world you do not have the love of the Father in you.

For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure. A craving for everything we see. I've got to have it. My friend's got it. I'm going to buy it.

And pride in our achievements and possessions. I'm not sure how I can say this and I don't mean it in an offensive way but please stop telling your children they're perfect.

They're great. They've got great possibilities. But do not tell them they're perfect because if they grow up thinking they're perfect they'll never seek a sinner a sinner saviour.

[29:33] They will never come to the throne of God and kneel down and say God I'm a sinner I need a saviour. And people are trying to create a perfection around their lives that is just impossible.

These are not from the Father it goes on to say from this world and then finally this verse and this world is fading away along with everything that we need to pray. But anyone who does what we need to do will live forever.

comments here. When many people great Christian people you know what I mean by that trying to make something of them that isn't true somebody like John Harper the last words he said were written in that tract are you saved.

You need this life jacket much more than I do. But Jesus his last comment before he died was so significant much more than that and everybody else would agree because he said it is finished.

The three most important words probably ever in history because our sin debt has been paid in full and Jesus would never have to go back and do that again and with the life and love of Christ that demands your obedience and my obedience however young however old you are however long you've been a Christian or whether you've just given your life to Christ I remember the night I first heard the gospel preached I cringed not because the man preaching was spineless and wimpy and

everything else that I had anticipated he would be but because almighty God showed me the depth of my sin and it terrified me why?

[31:35] because God is holy and I was so lost and I felt hopeless I imagine on this day when Jesus overturned the tables and drove out the people and the animals that people there were terrified and rightly so wake up but that love that God then poured into my heart and your heart came out the fear we previously felt for the shame of our sin and we became a new person but it didn't stop there because we need to then surrender surrender to God's authority every aspect of our lives every day we live like clay in the potter's hand the Bible says God has the right to manipulate us like a potter making an incredible vase because when we came to him we were just a cracked hole thing weren't we but he wants to make us into something very special

I hope this has come across in the way I'm hoping it has but my final comment is to repeat the comment at the start that the legacy you and I are passing on to our children and others we meet on the way maybe in only five minutes or in a sea as we are dying and so are they is the life we're living today it's got to count and it's got to be lived in obedience to Christ in one of the hymns we sang at the recent funeral in Christ alone one of the verses says no guilt in life no fear in death you know that was John Harper to a T but that was also the man who said who responded to when he said are you saved believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved this is the power of Christ in you and I for us to go through this day now from life's first cry to final breath Jesus commands your destiny no power of hell no scheme of man can ever pluck us from his hand till he returns or calls us home here in the power of Christ stand Amen thank you thank you Thank you.