

Luke

The Gospel for Everyone

Study 26 | Luke 19:45--20:8

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- **Prayer Class** this Sunday, March 21st in the sanctuary immediately following the worship service. The topic will be: *Texts for Prayer*
- **Newcomer's Dinner**, Sunday, March 28th, 7:30 PM.
- **Good Friday Service**, April 2nd, 7:30 PM at St. Augustine's Church (116 6th Avenue).
- **Easter Potluck**, Sunday, April 4th, immediately following the worship service.

Opportunities to Serve:

- **New Orleans Mission Trip**, April 24th - May 1st. Registrations are due by April 4th. See website for more details.
- **Dinner with Friends Hosts Needed**, April 15th, 16th, & 17th.
- **Easter Choir**, if you are interested in singing in the choir on Easter Sunday please contact Evan Mazunik, emazunik@gmail.com.

"The Old Temple"

1. After much build-up in Luke, Jesus finally enters Jerusalem for the last time. Why is this his first act? What does that tell us about his purpose?

We've intentionally made the questions a little broad and open to debate and discussion this week. The passage this week is short, so it likely will not be extremely helpful to narrow in on close exegesis of certain phrases this week, as it is often helpful to do with other passages. Rather, this scene is episodic and takes most of its meaning(s) from the larger context and narrative thrust of Luke as a whole. And so you should encourage your groups to think through all that we've seen Jesus doing over the last number of weeks and try to think through why he would march straight into the temple to stir up a fight, as it were. Remember, in Luke chapter 9 we saw Jesus "set his face" toward Jerusalem. Everything that's happened since then has been on his march toward Jerusalem. He's been recruiting followers to accompany him and has very much been setting up a showdown with the powers-that-be in Jerusalem. Just before our passage this week Jesus looks at Jerusalem from a nearby hill and weeps over it. This is the city where God has focused his redemptive purposes for millennia. And he weeps because they have rejected God by rejecting Jesus and he knows and predicts that this will lead to its utter destruction, which does in fact happen in AD 70. After lamenting over the city, he enters it and marches straight to the temple to "cleanse" it. The temple had been perverted by religious leaders and lay-people. Instead of being the center of God's mission in the world to bless and dwell with Israel *so that* they might be a blessing to *all* nations, it has become a place where the poor are extorted and worship is perverted and, perhaps even, a place where insurrectionists against Rome are being funded. So instead of blessing the nations, it has become a center of curse upon others, especially the poor and non-Israelites. And so as the true King, Jesus must restore the temple to its true purpose. This is in preparation for his impending work of replacing the earthly temple with a trans-national temple that would be made of living stones: Christ's body, the church.

2. What was wrong with what people were doing in the temple? How do religious people in our culture do similar things? How did Jesus respond, negatively and positively? What might be a faithful response by us in our culture?

We're not told much about what was happening in the temple, other than that Jesus drove out those who were selling and called the place a "den of robbers." We do know that the Old Testament made general provision for such trade, as people would need to travel from afar and buy animals for sacrifice at the

temple. It has been variously argued that perhaps 1) the exchange had moved from outside the temple into the court of the Gentiles, which was meant to be their place of welcome and prayer, 2) the exchange had become a place of injustice and oppression of the poor through unfair trade and financial extortion, 3) the 'den of robbers' is a reference to the possibility that the monies were going to fund insurrections. Whatever position we take, we can agree that Jesus was upset with certain commercial practices perverting and overwhelming the temple's purpose: to be a place of worship, where God met with his people. Jesus' response is twofold. First he violently clears out the temple, causing quite a physical scene. But in addition to this deconstruction he engages in a second reconstructive act: teaching them daily in the Temple. Jesus is God himself dwelling with people in the temple and instructing them in the ways of God. When we encounter perversions of worship and Christianity in the names of commerce and other distractions, how might we translate Jesus' negative and positive actions in ways appropriate to ourselves as finite, sinful followers of the Righteous King Jesus, who was uniquely suited to engage in the behavior recorded here?

3. What is the significance of the exchange in 20:1-8? In what ways do we sometimes question Jesus' authority when it challenges us? Does he always meet our objections on our terms? Why or why not? Explain.

The Pharisees do not like anything Jesus has been doing or saying. And now he's brought the fight right to their doorstep. They want to know who gave him "the right" to do these things. He refuses to answer the questions on their terms. Instead he riddles them into a corner, so that he won't have to give them an answer. He wants to expose their dishonesty, fear, and rejection of him. By asking them his trick question, he is forcing them to show their true colors: they will not accept him, but they're afraid of the people so they won't tell the truth. So Jesus in effect tells them that they don't deserve an answer, if they can't be honest in their own thoughts and answers. The point of the study questions here is not to make a one-to-one analogy between ordinary followers of Jesus and the Pharisees. Nevertheless, there are always degrees of analogy, and we want to warn and be learned from this small section of Luke's gospel as much as do from any part of Scripture. So when Jesus challenges us in areas we don't want him to prod into (e.g. dating, sex, work, gender, parenting, geography, consumer habits, etc.) how do we sometimes embody responses such as "Who gives YOU the right to tell me what to do with this part of my life?" We might say these things to God, we might say them to a pastor or another Christian. How might Jesus actually work to expose our hearts when we challenge his authority rather than answer us on the terms of our objections. Have you ever experienced this or seen it in someone's life? Why does Jesus sometimes refuse to answer our questions?

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