

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 11: 15-19

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 11, verse 15 to verse 19.

Verse 15: "So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves."

Yesterday we read that Jesus entered the temple the day before and carefully observed various items, then went out of the city to Bethany. After gaining some understanding of the entire temple, the next day He decided to enter the temple and began to cleanse it. He drove out those who were buying and selling in the temple, overturned the tables of the money changers, and the seats of those selling doves.

To understand the spiritual significance of these events, we must go back to the beginning when Moses required the Israelites to go to the temple three times a year to offer sacrifices. When they went, they had to bring their own prepared cattle, sheep, and doves to sacrifice, along with the abundant produce of the land to offer thanksgiving sacrifices to God. This shows that the reality of your sacrifices is connected to your daily life. In your life, you know that you have offended God and others, so you tend to your sacrifices in your life and also experiencing God's abundant grace in harvest. You bring what you have labored for and add God's blessings to come to the temple. In other words, three times a year you come to the temple to offer sacrifices, and this act of sacrifice is connected to your daily life.

Later, to accommodate those who lived far away and found it inconvenient to bring various animals such a long distance, Moses' law allowed them to sell their animals locally and then buy animals in Jerusalem to offer as sacrifices. But in spiritual terms, the act of sacrifice should still be connected to your daily life. You should live your daily life devoutly, and in your life, you must be prepared to offer sacrifices.

In Jesus' time, due to the corruption of the entire priestly system, the priests allowed people to sell various animals in the temple, and to exchange money in the temple. Moreover, because the animals to be offered had to pass inspection by the priests, if you bought animals on the road to the Mount of Olives or other areas in Jerusalem, they would usually inspect them very carefully, often declaring them unfit.

However, if you bought animals in the temple, such as oxen, sheep, or doves, they were more lenient, and the priests profited from this. Additionally, all Israelites returning to the temple had to pay the temple tax, half a shekel per person. While Roman coins could be used, they bore images of idols and thus could not be used for the temple tax. Therefore, they allowed the exchange of Roman coins for Jewish shekels there, which was also under the control of the priests, allowing them to make a hefty profit. Because of this situation, Jesus entered the temple and drove out those who were selling there, overturning the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves, all of which were related to profiting from the temple.

Verse 16: "And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple."

In those days, passing through the temple was actually a shortcut if you were traveling from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples came from Bethany or Bethphage, descending from the foothills of the Mount of Olives, then heading south, passing through the Kidron Valley, and then northward into the temple. In fact, they took a much longer route before officially entering the temple. People carrying heavy loads could use the temple as a shortcut to enter the city of Jerusalem. However, Jesus did not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.

Verse 15 talks about commerce and activities related to sacrifices and temple taxes inside the temple, while verse 16 addresses convenience and shortcuts.

Verse 17: "Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

On the previous day, Jesus carefully observed the various objects inside the temple, gaining a thorough understanding of its condition. Today, He decisively entered the temple, His house, to restore it to its rightful purpose. The original purpose of the temple, as Jesus said, was to be called a "house of prayer for all nations," where people of all kinds could come to pray to God. This prayer spoke of the temple as a place of direct communication between people and God, where they could come to sacrifice and worship. In order for there to be smooth communication between people and God, sin needed to be addressed through sacrifice.

By resolving the barrier between people and God, there could then be beautiful communion and worship. According to the law of Moses, people were supposed to live devout lives to the best of their ability, but even in devout living, they would unintentionally sin. Therefore, when it came time for sacrifice, they brought their toiled offerings directly to the temple to offer their labors. Here, they could have appropriate communication and prayer with God. However, due to the corruption of the entire priestly system, allowing for profit-making within it, people were permitted to engage in buying and selling in the temple, exchanging money, and selling doves. Jesus thus declared, "You have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

In reality, today is no different. When we come to the church, to God's house, the church is where we should come before God, to worship Him, to have intimate communion with Him. God's original intention was for us, as individuals, to be prepared in our lives, to have toiled in our lives, and then bring what we have labored for into the church. On one hand, to offer sacrifices for our sins, and on the other hand, to offer thanks for what we have labored for, and then have sweet communion with God.

Therefore, there should be no commercial activity in the church, and even for the convenience of some people, we should not lose the essence of coming to worship God and have communion with Him. Our motive for coming to church should be simply and sincerely to come before God, to offer thanks to God, and to worship God together with our brothers and sisters. Every saint around us is our brother or sister in the Lord, they should not be our business partners, let alone our customers. We should strive to maintain a pure relationship.

Coming to the church is simply to worship God, simply to pray to God, and to have a beautiful communion with God. From another perspective, Paul also tells us that our bodies are temples of God. Therefore, when we come to the church, is our hearts filled with various transactions, filled with the noise of doing business, filled with impure motives? Let us pray that God will cleanse us from our hearts first, so that our hearts can become the throne of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, every Sunday, when we come to participate in the Sunday worship, it is another opportunity for us to offer ourselves on the altar. Through eating bread and drinking the cup, we receive the grace of Christ, and we also ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts, to remove from our hearts the thoughts and motives that engage in commerce, exchange silver coins, seek convenience, and all kinds of things that are not pleasing to God. Let us come to worship, to praise, to glorify God with clean hands and pure hearts.

This time, Jesus cleansed the temple during the last week of His earthly ministry. This was the second time Jesus cleansed the temple, with the first instance recorded in John 2:13-22, which occurred at the beginning of His ministry. That event likely took place during Jesus's first Passover as He began His ministry. He entered the temple, drove out the cattle and sheep, overturned the tables of the money changers, and said to those selling doves, "Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise" (John 2:16). At that time, He referred to the temple as "My Father's house."

When He was twelve years old, He also went to Jerusalem for the Passover with His parents. After His parents left, He stayed behind in the temple, sitting among the

teachers, listening and asking questions. Three days later, His parents found Him in the temple, and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You" (Luke 2:48). Jesus responded in Luke 2:49, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" "To be "in my Father's house" can also be translated as "about my Father's business," indicating that Jesus Christ, being the only begotten Son of the Father, was sent by the Father to fulfill His ministry. Therefore, the temple on earth was always the Father's temple, the Father's house, to Him. After Jesus began His ministry, He likely went to Jerusalem for the Passover every year, until the final week of His earthly ministry, when He was fully prepared.

During this last Passover, He was to become the sacrificial Lamb, taking away the sins of the world. This time, He personally cleansed the temple and declared, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17). He clearly revealed that His salvation was to reach all nations and proclaimed to everyone that His time had come, and He was prepared for it.

Verse 18: "And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching."

These chief priests served in the temple, and these scribes were also people who taught in the temple, and they were supposed to teach the people how to worship God in the temple. As a result, they turned God's temple into a den of thieves. Jesus' words exposed their corruption and filth. They must have been very angry when they heard such words and sought ways to get rid of Jesus.

However, on the other hand, they were afraid of Jesus because the people were amazed at His teaching. Jesus had reached the last week of His ministry, and He was ready, so He directly faced the evil forces that wanted to remove Him. On one hand, He exposed their situation, and on the other hand, He couldn't find rest in the temple, which had already been corrupted.

Verse 19: “And when evening had come, He went out of the city.”

During that week, every evening, Jesus went to Bethany. Because in Bethany, there was a group of disciples who loved the Lord, a group of disciples willing to serve the Lord, a group of disciples willing to testify for the Lord. Bethany is a representation of the church today. In the temple of Jerusalem, Jesus could not find rest, so He left the temple and went to Bethany, or we can say, to the church.

Dear brothers and sisters, the church is where Jesus Christ can find rest. We must strive to maintain the purity of the church, to prevent the corruption of the world from entering the church. The church should be a place where saints can come to pray, worship, and praise.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for examining our hearts: first, removing impure thoughts and selfish motives, so that our hearts can truly become Your throne; also purify the church where I am, removing anything that does not please you. Let the church become a place of prayer, worship, and praise, as well as a place where You can find rest. Bless my church and church life, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!