

Title: Serving Notice
Text: Luke 19.45-48
Theme: Jesus previews God's plan for creation
Series: Luke
Prop Stmt: God will dwell with his people who have been cleansed and hear his word with their hearts.

Read Text:

This message has 2 introductions and then 2 points. The reason for the 2 introductions is because we are starting the opening portion of the final section of Luke's gospel. I want to introduce this opening portion to you and then I want to introduce our specific text.

Intro #1 (the end of Luke)

Luke 19.45 – 24.53 is the final section of Luke's gospel. These 5 chapters are the destination of the book. And 19.45-21.38 sets the stage for the betrayal, arrest, trial, then death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

When Luke wrote this account, he did not use chapters and verses. These were added later in history to help people be able to find their way around. Often, the chapters and verses are helpful, but there are times when they appear to create a break that makes it easy for us to have a disconnect that isn't supposed to be there. That is the case here. The last 4 verses of chapter 19 would be better served if they were part of chapter 20 because they set up what happens when Jesus is teaching in the Temple. Look at v.47. Jesus is teaching daily. The chief priests and scribes and leaders were seeking to destroy him, but they were frustrated because the people were hanging on his words.

20.1 – Jesus was teaching the people and the chief priests, scribes and elders tried to take him down. Details followed.

21.37-38 – Everyday he was teaching in the temple. All the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

Those statements are like bookends. Everything that happens in between escalates the response of the priests, scribes, pharisees and elders (leaders) from wanting to find fault with him so they can warn the people, to plotting his execution because they could not find fault with him nor with his words. Jesus was crucified because of what he said. He taught things that people hated. He would have been amazing, amusing, even astonishing if he stuck with the miracle routine. Heal the sick, raise a few dead, feed a bunch of people, help fisherman get more fish, find money so people can pay their taxes, would have been pretty popular. But it was primarily his words that exposed the hatred in others and they attacked him for it.

Have you ever noticed how our culture is like that? What does the world expect from the church? Feed the poor, help the needy, be part of the social net that helps people with certain challenges, but do not use words. Do not talk about sin. Do not say that Jesus is the only way. Do not say that sex outside of marriage is wrong. Do not say that gay marriage is offensive to God, or that men should be godly leaders in their homes. When you repeat those words of God, then the church is crucified for being hateful, exclusive, and a social cancer that has to be eliminated for the good of all. That is a temptation. If we tone down our words, but turn up our social causes, then the world will adore us and will want to hear what we have to say. It's tempting to believe that. However, it is simply not true. You can see how groups of churches have done just that over time. When you abandon the word of God, you may not be hated, but neither will you have any message of truth or hope. Jesus himself said in Luke 21.33, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*"

We all see that it is the religious leaders who are the biggest haters of Christ. What are we doing right now? We're in church. Are we religious? And, what am I doing? I am leading our religious gathering. Yikes! What do we do with this observation? Do we brush it off, because, yea, we are religious, but we aren't religious like they were religious? I hope that is the case, but I think we need to recognize that religion, particularly good religion is an easy mask to hide behind because good religion gives credibility that a hypocrite can use for evil purposes.

In this section Jesus is teaching in the Temple. His words arouse two responses: 1) the people hang on them. 2) the leaders reject them and attack the messenger. This section is written to tell us what happened, but also to help us identify what is really going on in our own hearts. How do you respond when you hear something that may expose a failure, or weakness? Is your instinctive response to attack the messenger and fight back? Or is it, to consider that there may be some truth to that, and do some introspection? Beloved, that is the difference between pride and humility. That is the difference between the religious leaders who crucified Christ and the people who listened to him. That is the difference between heaven and hell.

Intro #2 (our text and the beginning of the final section)

Ever play "capture the flag?" Players divide up into two teams, each with a respective flag on their turf that they display and seek to protect. Both teams try to steal the other team's flag and get it back to their side without getting nabbed. First team to get the other's flag safely to the other side, wins. Winning a war means to defeat the opponent's government, not just their flag. That may mean attacking their palace, government buildings or capturing their leaders. When Jesus invaded Jerusalem, he did not go to Herod's palace and demand surrender, nor to the residence of Pilate, the governor from Rome. Instead, *he entered the temple*" and began to clean house and he called it, "*my house.*" There was a reason why he did this and why this ignited the fire that led to his death.

1. The Temple is the Plan.

A. The Temple in heaven was the pattern for the Tabernacle/Temple on earth.

Revelation 11.19 specifically speaks of “*God’s temple in heaven.*”

Revelation 15.5 calls it “*the sanctuary of the tent (tabernacle) of witness in heaven.*”

The temple was the place where God ruled from and lived. The throne of God was there. He lived where he “worked.”

Revelation 7.15 “*...they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple...*”

Just as God made man and woman in his image, God made creation based on a pattern.

B. The Garden was the place where God lived with mankind on earth.

Eden was a garden/temple. It was beautiful, orderly, peaceful, harmonious and safe. It was heaven on earth, not just in terms of appearance and environment, but God would come in the cool of the day and enjoy Adam and Eve. While God was the Creator and Ruler, he entrusted the Garden to Adam and Eve to rule over and to spread the order and beauty of the garden over all the earth. Adam lost access to that Temple/Garden due to his sin. God could not live with man anymore. Paradise was gone, but not forever. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, God gave Moses plans to construct a tabernacle, where God would dwell in the center of his people in order to restore the original intent of creation.

C. The Tabernacle on earth was to reflect the Temple in Heaven.

Hebrews 9.23 speaks of the Tabernacle system as being “*copies of the heavenly things.*” The Tabernacle was portable at the time because the permanent home had not yet been acquired by the people of God. The inside of the tabernacle (walls, ceilings) and even the attire worn by the priests was designed to reflect the garden of Eden. This was a copy of the heavenly realities. God would display his presence in that Tabernacle. God could live with his people on the basis of atonement. Properly offered sacrifices appeased the justice of God so that God was able to be present in his people. While other nations had incredibly elaborate temples, no one had the Shekinah Glory of God in their midst. Later...

D. Solomon’s Temple displayed on the outside, some of the glory that was on the inside.

The grandeur, beauty, pageantry, construction materials, sheer magnitude and costly artifacts and exquisite detail made Solomon’s Temple a wonder to the world. The glory of God on the inside was reflected by the architecture and splendor on the outside. That Temple lasted for about 410 years before it was destroyed by the Babylonians. The loss of the Temple, meant the loss of sacrifice, which meant the loss of atonement, which meant the loss of forgiveness. No forgiveness means no salvation and no hope.

E. 2nd Temple, recovery of sacrifices but not the splendor

When the Jews returned to their land, they rebuilt the altar (Ezra 3.2) and then set about rebuilding the Temple. They rebuilt the altar first because they had to have a means by which their sin could be atoned. Several years later construction on the temple started and it took about 20 years to complete. It was rather modest and nothing like its predecessor, but it lasted for over 500 years until Herod's renovations began in 20 B.C.

F. Herod's Temple attempted to recover the grandeur

Herod's Temple attempted to recover the grandeur of Solomon's Temple, but God's presence in the glory cloud never showed up in the 2nd Temple. Jesus predicted that Herod's Temple would not last, but something better was coming. Related to this, the glory cloud of God's presence did show up in that temple, but on Jesus at his Transfiguration.

G. Jesus was and is the Temple in person.

Charles Wesley wrote the lyrics to Hark the Herald Angels Sing, which include the lines, "veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity." Just as the glory of God was "hidden" surprisingly in a modest appearing tent, Jesus veiled his true glory in the modest appearing body of a man. John 1.14 says that Jesus tabernacled among us. As the God-man, Jesus was heaven and earth in one person even as he was heaven on earth. When Jesus ascended, he sent the Spirit, to indwell his people, not in one place in Jerusalem, but as his people all over the world. When Christ died, the curtain of the Temple ripped apart revealing that there was no glory in there. The glory was now global wherever the gospel was preached and people believed. Now,

H. The Church is the Temple of God in people.

1 Cor. 3.16-17 "*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ... God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*" If you are a follower of Christ, your body belongs to God. It is his temple. When you hear people shout, "my body, my choice" they are usually not saying that before eating yogurt and granola, or working out. They usually say that as an excuse to abusing their body and engaging in immorality that invites STD's. That is the degrading of the body. Followers of Christ have a different view of the body. Our bodies are temples for the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 6.13b-20) There is no more building on earth that contains the glory of God. His glory is manifested in his people. This is true now and forever because

I. The Final State is The Temple forever.

Revelation 21.1-3 "*—Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,*

coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them."

Revelation 21.22 "—And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

Therefore,

2. The Temple is Sacred.

Jesus knew what the Temple meant and what it would come to mean. The temple in his day was built on the place where Abraham offered Isaac to God. God met Abraham there that day. God created us to dwell with us, but in order for God to dwell with us, there is a lot that had to happen. The history of the temple tells that long, deliberate and detailed plan of God. However, in order for a holy God to meet with unholy people, our sin has to be atoned for so we can be reconciled to God. Standing in front of the doors of the Temple itself was the massive altar. You cannot meet with God without sacrifice. The innocent sacrifice of a pure offering had to be given in order to remove your guilt. But these offerings had been offered for hundreds and hundreds of years. With the death of Christ, all other offerings were made obsolete. No more need for the temple.

Jesus knew what this Temple was supposed to represent. It was sacred to him. This was the place where the angel of God had stopped the plague against Jerusalem and where David offered a sacrifice. Abraham and then David made offerings here. Now, the founder of the final nation, and the ultimate king had come. He was coming to his house, his place that would one day give way to the final place. Therefore, it was sacred to him. And what did he find? He found the very ones who were supposed to represent him, using their position to enrich themselves. Using God (the sacred) as a pretense for greed arouses the anger of God

God is a giver (John 3.16) not a taker. The priests were compensated by a system that God established in the OT Law. This was not that. By the time of Christ, the position of Chief Priest or High Priest had become very powerful, politically and as you know politics is often, influence for money. Here was the system: The law prescribed what kind of sacrifices had to be offered and even what kind of temple tax had to be paid. People traveling from long distances had to purchase the prescribed items such as: animals, wine, salt, oil and doves. They also had to pay the temple tax ½ shekel. If you had Roman or Greek coins, which were used in much commerce then you had to exchange those coins for the Jewish shekel. Selling items and exchanging money was not the problem. What was the problem was having a monopoly on the items being sold and enacting surcharges and exchange rates that went to the family of the high priest. It was a racket. In order to obey God's Word, the people had to participate in a system that was rigged by greed and corruption. Jesus did two things that lit them up: 1) He exposed their greed and called it out. 2) He threatened their slush fund.

This is like idol worship and animism throughout history. Those who have influence over souls or those who claim to personally hold the authority to forgive sin and have a grip on the ritual that can save someone's soul are believed to have ultimate power. Power like that has and is often used for greed. This is the story of temples and cathedrals all over the world. But God is not like the gods of this world and therefore, his Temple is to be radically different. When Jesus said, "It is written" he was quoting from Isaiah 56.7. Isaiah was quoting God who said, "*for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*" The Temple of God was different than all the other temples. The other temples were temples of false gods who damned their followers and took from them. God gives life eternally and abundantly to his followers. So, when the leaders were enriching themselves at the expense of the people, they were making God's Temple just like all the other temples. Then Jesus quoted Jeremiah who condemned those who were abusing others, stealing from them and then showing up at the Temple and pretending to worship God. God will not tolerate hypocrisy. Jeremiah exposed it 600 years before and almost died because of it. Jesus did here, and he did die for it.

Isaiah warned of the abuse taking place in the temple in his day as did Jeremiah. The people did not listen and that temple was destroyed and the people went into exile for 70 years. Jesus is repeating that warning here and this temple is going to be destroyed as well and Israel went into exile for almost 1900 years. However, Jesus was about to render the temple and all of its sacrifices as being obsolete, because a greater Temple was here. The true Tabernacle of God was in the temporary Temple. A major change was about to take place. God kept his promises and Jesus was serving notice.

For unbelievers: You have a longing for the sacred. You know that your life has a "higher purpose" than eating, sleeping and dying. Look at how Christ puts all of it together. He is the center of it all and without him, you will never have that center, or grounding.

For believers: Purity, holiness, sacred, are not weights to be born, but joys to be pursued. Our lives as followers of Christ is not just believing the right truths, but enjoying those truths because we enjoy our delightful God.