

## “[RE]FRAME - Trouble in the Temple”

Scripture: Mark 11:12-19

Graphics: frames, pictures, temple, church, worship

Big Truth: The story of Jesus’ final week on Earth has multiple levels of understanding and meaning. What the events and actions seem to be on the surface are not always what they appear. In our walk with Jesus in the church, it’s easy to lose sight of the bigger picture while reading or hearing about the events of Jesus’ life. This series will help us see the bigger picture through the scenes that lead to the cross and empty tomb on Easter.

Focus phrase: Jesus wants to be my first love.

### 1. Introduction

- A. A few years ago, my brother and I took our annual motorcycle trip to Pittsburgh. One afternoon, we started asking some of the locals about the best places to eat dinner. One person recommended a place called *The Church*.
- B. As a pastor, that was a little perplexing to me, since usually when people put “The Church” and “dinner” together, my mind immediately goes to **pot luck** dinner, which, if you don’t know this, is my absolute LEAST favorite style of dinner of ALL time, forever, amen. I suppose in some ways I answered the wrong calling if I wanted to avoid pot luck in my life...but I digress.
- C. After some clarification, *The Church* was reportedly a very good restaurant that had been established in a former Roman Catholic Church that closed down a decade or so prior.
- D. Now I’m even MORE intrigued, so my brother and I decided we’d ride across town, and see what it was all about.
- E. My first impression of this building from the outside was that it looked like an old Catholic Church...stone and brick and...well, like a church.
- F. Walking in, it was no different than walking into the old Methodist Church that we went to with my Grandma when we visited. Creaky floors, lots of old wood, that old church ‘smell’, right?
- G. It wasn’t until we got into what WAS the sanctuary that things began to be really surreal for me. The sanctuary must’ve held 1,000 people for worship in its heyday. The area for the now-removed pulpit, called the chancel, was on the far side of the room, and looked like every other church chancel I’d seen, except for the very large and very numerous fermentation tanks that are used to make beer. That’s about when my brain went into overload trying to reconcile what I was seeing.
- H. We debated whether to stay or not, but we’d walked a ways after parking our bikes, we were hungry, and we decided to stay and eat. I’m thankful for that because it gave me an incredible chance to truly look around and reflect on this

place, the Church, my faith, and the process that led to a church becoming a brew pub in a city of several million people.

- I. Looking around the room, the thing that stood out to me the most was a very beautiful carving of the scripture passage, in Latin, ““in fide vivo Filii Dei, qui dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me” The english translation of this is from Galatians 2:20, “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
- J. In that moment, as I Googled that translation, I was struck by the incredible irony that a banner carved into the wood for all the worshippers to see every time that came into that church was now as foreign and meaningless to the patrons of the restaurant as it must’ve been for the worshippers who used to be there. Now, that may be too harsh, but because it was no longer a church, they had lost their first love...faith in Jesus who gave himself up for me.
- K. Jesus came into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of his life, knowing full well that He would give Himself up for you and me. During this season of Lent, we’re taking a journey through the gospel of Mark, tracing and reliving the last week of Jesus’ life.
- L. Our experience at The Church Brew Works in Pittsburgh made me think of our story today in Mark 11, when Jesus went to the Temple and thrashed it up a bit. As I was having my existential crisis in that restaurant, I envisioned Jesus coming into that place and turning over tables and wrecking the place.
- M. But then the profound thought hit me. Jesus is less concerned that people are running a brew house in a former church and WAY MORE concerned that a church lost sight of Galatians 2:20 and allowed their first love to be sold to a brew house. I suspect Jesus probably tried to flip over some tables when the church was walking away from Him...and not now that Galatians 2:20 is being proclaimed in a place where people will be searching for its meaning.
- N. This message is entitled Trouble in the Temple. At first glance, that trouble seemed to be about anger at people selling stuff in the Temple Courts. The Bigger Picture is Jesus’ love for us...and that he was about to die for us...and how He wants our hearts first. If you’re taking notes, write this down: Jesus wants to be my first love.
- O. Let’s pray and dive in...
- P. PRAY!!!**
- Q. Turn with me to Mark 11, starting in verse 12...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ verses 12-19

- B. Last week, we ended the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a colt by reading Mark 11:11, "Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve."
- C. I mentioned last week that, as we just read today, Jesus APPARENTLY didn't LIKE everything he saw when he went into the temple the previous day, because he came BACK the NEXT day and kind of went OFF. Overnight, he had developed a PLAN for the next day, not to make a point...but to change the world and what everyone THOUGHT was His plan.
- D. So many times, this scripture gets framed as Jesus got mad at a fig tree and got mad at people who were selling stuff in the Temple courts. So, he cursed a tree and then he flipped over tables and kicked people out. I've seen this taken so far in the church that some churches won't let anyone sell anything to raise money in the church because Jesus doesn't allow it...and this text proves it.
- E. First, that's a total mis-read of the text here. But more importantly, it's missing the essential point that this isn't about buying and selling things at all, really.
- F. This message, including the little scene of Jesus cursing the fig tree is Jesus' prophetic action that says, "The religious leaders in the temple have lost their purpose. They've lost their first love. Their walking away from the faith. I came to not only to replace the temple, but to BE your first love."
- G. Let's REFRAME these two scenes.
- i. The first scene finds Jesus and his twelve walking back into the city, when Jesus sees a fig tree.
    - a. Now, at this time of the year, spring, there wouldn't be much visible fruit on that tree. But, it was worth a shot, because Jesus was hungry.
    - b. What he found was a tree that only had leaves. Now, at this time of year, this fig tree would be expected to at least have buds...something that would indicate that fruit would be coming. The potential for fruit.
    - c. But Jesus found nothing. Only leaves. Which indicated to Jesus that this tree was worthless and would not produce fruit again.
    - d. So all could hear, he said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"
    - e. At first glance, Jesus is just mad because he was hungry and Chick-a-Fila was closed on Sundays.
    - f. But there was a much bigger picture. As we reframe this, and because this scene comes right before the scene in the Temple, the picture turns prophetic. This fig tree represents the temple itself. And what Jesus is stating publicly is that the Temple will not produce any more fruit because it has failed to even have the potential to be faithful. It's lost its

first love. It need to be changed and cleansed...and that can only happen if it dies and is reborn in Jesus himself.

- ii. The second scene, as the disciples are scratching their heads wondering why Jesus cursed a tree, has Jesus and the disciples walking back into the temple.
  - a. The last time he was here, the day before, he didn't like what he saw.
  - b. THIS time, he passionately (that's what we usually call anger that seems more holy than it may appear) drove people out of the temple courts... overturned tables of the money changers and dove sellers...he stopped people from carrying vessels through the temple courts where he was.
  - c. Basically, Jesus was saying, "This is not about legalistically following the sacrifice rules or getting the right coins! This is about true worship!"
  - d. He caused a scene, so that he could get everyone's attention. And while he had people's attention, he alluded to Jeremiah 7:11 which says, "Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the Lord."
  - e. At first glance, this guy whom they saw ride into town on a colt, but who they thought was to be their king, now raged into the temple courts and started flipping tables.
  - f. Yet, the Bigger Picture is that this scene is perfectly consistent with the triumphal entry. Jesus blew the people's expectations out of the water with the colt parade. Jesus now blew their expectations out of the water again by flipping tables at the Temple...
- iii. The people probably thought that King Jesus would ride into the city and go to Herod or Pilate...anyone who he could overthrow in order to take over the government and win the nation for the Jews!
- iv. Instead, he went right to the heart of the culture and religion...to overthrow the temple.

### **3. Application**

- A. For you and me, our first glance at this portrait is that Jesus got angry and so it's OK for us to be angry. Jesus said what needed to be said, so it's OK for us to say things that need to be said.
- B. All that is true, if, as the Apostle Paul said, "Let all that you do be done in love." (1 Corinthians 16:14)
- C. But, to REFRAME this, the Bigger Picture is not about your anger or about your desire to speak your mind, even if in love.
- D. The Bigger Picture is that Jesus wants to transform your heart to such a complete degree, to transform our church to such a complete degree, to

transform the community and the world to such a complete degree, that **everything you believe, say, and do, is torn down and rebuilt in Jesus.**

- E. That your heart is so focused on Jesus that what YOU want to do, what YOU think is important, or what YOU think is enough gets examined and transformed by Jesus.
- F. This is about the kingdom of God breaking into this world until Jesus returns and our job is to END so Jesus can begin in our lives, like the fig tree, like the temple.
- G. HOW? How do you and I reframe our lives with Jesus so that the picture is about Jesus and not us?
- H. **#1 Receive Jesus' Desire for Correction - he sees you.**
  - i. When Jesus came to Jerusalem, he SAW everything in the Temple. When he came back the next day, he SAW the fig tree and then the people in the temple. He wanted those things to be set right in HIM!
  - ii. He sees you...right now...with all your sin and struggle. But he does not want to and will not leave you there in it.
  - iii. Receive the correction that Jesus wants to offer you. That's not ever easy, but there are things in your life that are not part of the process of bearing kingdom fruit and must be corrected.
  - iv. Most of the time, those selfish pursuits are the things that are keeping you and me from opening that part of our lives for fruit-bearing.
  - v. Correction isn't a negative thing when done by a loving God who sees you and knows you. Correction is life-giving because it sets you on the right path from here on.
  - vi. It's the NEXT part that's the hard part.
- I. **#2 - Allow Jesus to wreck you - he loves you.**
  - i. I sometimes use this term and people think it's weird, but when Jesus wrecks us, it's more like a loving deconstruction. Yet, being wreck also means that what Jesus is tearing down can never be rebuilt.
  - ii. Jesus had no intention of regrowing the fig tree or rebuilding the Temple in the form they could see.
  - iii. Allow Jesus to wreck you in order to get rid of the things in your life that He doesn't want present. Apathy. Fear. Sin. Selfishness. Religion versus relationship. Entitlement. Privilege.
  - iv. Now that we've switched the clocks ahead, it's a great time to allow Jesus to come in and flip over some tables in your heart...things you've allowed to become more important than Him...or your worship...or your faith.

- v. And not just to set those things in a box for later, but put them in a box, light it on fire, send it to the bottom of the ocean, and never go there again. Only by the POWER of Jesus can sin be wrecked... forever.
- J. Finally, #3, I love this one, **Be spellbound by Jesus - he wants you.**
  - i. The religious leaders were afraid of the power that Jesus had because the people were SPELLBOUND by him.
  - ii. If I live the rest of my life, whatever I have left, and I'm spellbound by Jesus' teaching and his life and his love for me, I can think of NO BETTER thing! I don't want money or fame or cars. It's Jesus we desire!
  - iii. When you're spellbound by Jesus, it takes you to your knees...it lifts your hands in worship...it opens your life to obey...it draws you to others who are spellbound...it causes you to serve and share your life.
  - iv. Jesus wants you...he loves you...he sees you. Be corrected, wrecked, and spellbound by Jesus.
  - v. Focus on Him alone, and never lose your first love.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. The banner over the brew pub said, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
- B. Are you willing to allow Jesus to see you and correct you in faith?
- C. Are you willing to allow Jesus to lovingly wreck you today, again?
- D. Are you willing to allow Jesus to capture every part of your attention?
- E. If we don't let Jesus in to see us, wreck us, and rebuild us, then at some point, as we lose touch with the real Jesus, this place (the church) may be a restaurant or community center without Him. God forbid!
- F. Yet, even though we have a great facility, that doesn't mean we automatically have the heart of Jesus to use it for His glory.
- G. The trouble in the temple was not the temple itself, but the people who had lost their way...lost their first love.
- H. This week, spend time reflecting on your first love right now. If it's not Jesus, then get there again. Reframe your life into the picture with Jesus.
- I. It'll be a great reframing of your life during this season of Lent...and forever.
- J. Let's pray...