

17. The Gospel of John—2:13-17 (b)

“The Temple of God” Pt.2

(2/4/18)

John 2:13-17 (NKJV)

¹³ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. ¹⁵ When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" ¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.*"

Here in this passage Jesus cleanses the temple—apparently, He cleansed it twice, once at the beginning of His ministry as recorded in John's gospel chapter two; and then at the end of His ministry as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels.

I. The Temple of God in Jesus' Day

The temple was the place where animals were brought to the priests and then sacrificed to atone for sin—this was necessary so that sinful man and a holy God could enter into fellowship with one another.

The temple was also a place of worship and prayer—and yet it had one more important function.

You see God had set aside the outermost court of the temple complex—also known as '*the Court of the Gentiles*', to be a place where Gentiles seekers could come to learn more about the God of Israel in order to convert to the Jewish faith.

This was supposed to be a place of reverence and prayer—but instead the Sadducees and chief priests had turned it into a place of merchandising and thievery—so Jesus cleansed it!

II. The Temple of God in Our Day

So that was a quick review of the temple in Jesus' day (for a more complete look get the CD from last week or go online).

What about the temple of God in our day?

“There is no temple in Jerusalem today—it was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans.”

That's true, the temple in Jerusalem is gone—but in Ephesians 2 Paul tells us that today God dwells in the temple of His Church.

And last week we saw how that it wasn't until Jesus cleansed the temple in His day from all the corruption that it could then become what God intended it to be—the same is true with God's temple, the Church, today.

What is the Church to be if it's going to fulfill the purpose for which God created it?

Last week we said that in looking at what the Church *should* be—we first need to look at what the Church is *not* to be.

A. What the Church is not to be

1. The church is not to be a money-making business

Mark 11:15-16 (NKJV)

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. ¹⁶ And He would not allow anyone to carry wares (commerce) through the temple.

John 2:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

In other words—Jesus forbid the house of God from being turned into a business.

The commercialization of the Church takes different forms—one form that is very popular today is running the church like a *corporation* that looks to market the church to people which it sees as '*potential customers*'.

These 'customers' then purchase a variety of goods and services—which enriches the 'corporation', gives it a healthy 'bottom line' and allows it to 'franchise' itself into new markets.

This creates a man-centered, consumer-driven model of the church that focuses more on church growth and prosperity than it does on the personal holiness and Christ-likeness of its members.

This gets into the next point under the heading—"What the church is *not* to be"

2. The church is not to be a place where pastors and preachers are turned into celebrities who then exploit their congregations for personal gain

2 Peter 2:1, 3 (NLT)

¹ But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies...³ In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

Peter is telling us that just as false prophets and false teachers had infiltrated into the ranks of God's people Israel in the Old Testament period—so to similar false teachers and religious phonies would infiltrate and infect God's people in the N.T. Church.

And notice that Peter puts his finger on the one thing that would characterize all of them—their attempt to use their 'ministries' to make money off of the people of God.

In fact, the early church had a name for these wolves in sheep's clothing—they called them "*Christ merchants*"—those who 'sold Jesus' like a commodity for personal gain.

2 Corinthians 2:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.

This is the ultimate blasphemy—reducing Jesus to a commodity to profit off of instead of honoring Him as the King of the universe to be worshipped and served.

Paul talked about these greedy charlatans in 1Tim. 6—he said these so-called "ministers" have "*corrupt minds and preach that godliness (Christianity) is a way to become wealthy*"—Paul said, "*have nothing to do with them*".

The word "minister" is not the title of a professional clergyman ("The Minister") who is to be pampered and served like some kind of celebrity.

The word in the Greek means "servant"—Jesus said, "*I have not come to be served but to serve and to give My life a ransom for many.*" (Matt. 20:28)

Too many ministers today are celebrities not servants—those who are in the ministry to be served and make lots of money off of God's people.

They are nothing more than ‘*Holy Spirit Hucksters*’, celebrity pastors and preachers who if asked to speak somewhere will only fly first class and demand to be put up in 5-star hotels.

Arthur W. Pink—

“False prophets are to be found in the circles of the most orthodox and pretend to have a fervent love for souls, yet they fatally delude multitudes concerning the way of salvation. These pulpit, platform and pamphlet hucksters (today it would include radio and TV) have wantonly lowered the standard of divine holiness and so adulterated the gospel in order to make it palatable to the carnal mind”.

Maybe you saw in the news the other day that Kenneth Copeland, probably the best known ‘Word of Faith’ preacher in the world, just acquired (his ministry I should say) a new \$36 million private jet.

When he was asked why he needs *another* jet, he said that flying commercial would require him to rub elbows with “a long tube of demons” and real people who might want him to pray for them.

The author of an article I was reading on Copeland said,

“Kenneth Copeland, who leads the "Believer's Voice of Victory," TV show and network, is a giant within the Word of Faith branch of Pentecostalism. Kenneth Copeland Ministries operates on a 1,500-acre campus near Fort Worth, TX, equipped with a church, a private airstrip, and a hangar for the ministry's \$17.5 million jet and other aircraft. Copeland resides with his wife Gloria in a \$6 million church-owned lakefront mansion.”

You might be wondering what Kenneth Copeland is worth—here’s what I found out:

- *Kenneth Copeland is worth 760 million dollars*
- *Benny Hinn: Net Worth \$42 Million*
- *Joel Osteen: Net Worth \$40 Million*
- *Creflo Dollar: Net Worth \$27 Million*

Now, that's a far cry from Jesus who said—

Luke 9:58 (NKJV)

⁵⁸ ... "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head."

Matthew 20:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Ministry is about being a servant to all.

The local church should be a place where people can go to find God and worship God and not have their hunger to know God exploited by crooked preachers who "*make merchandise*" of them.

1 Peter 5:1-3 (NLT)

¹ And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: ² Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³ Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.

The Sadducees and chief priests were greedy, corrupt men who turned the worship of God into a money-making business which again is why Jesus referred to the temple as "*a den of thieves*" (Matt. 21:13).

They were cut from the same cloth as the corrupt prophets and priests in the O.T. that God indicted in Ezekiel 34—

Ezekiel 34:1-3, 5-10 (NKJV)

¹ And the word of the LORD came to me, saying... 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel [the spiritual leaders—prophets, priests] who feed themselves!

Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ³ You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock...⁵ So they were scattered because *there* was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. ⁶ My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them*." ⁷ "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ "as I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there* was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"-- ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."

Jeremiah 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

B. What the Church is to be

1. The Church is to be a house of prayer

Matthew 21:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

¹³ And He said to them, "It is written, '*My house shall be called a house of prayer*,'..."

Here Jesus quotes from Isaiah 56:7 where twice in one verse God calls His temple "*a house of prayer*".

Notice He didn't call it a house of business networking; or a house of self-help programs; or a house of counseling; or a house of entertainment—The Lord said His house was to be called a house of prayer.

Now certainly the Church is more than just prayer—

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

All of these are legitimate and important functions of the local church—for an in-depth look at this go online to daybydayradio.org and find the topical series, “*What in the World is the Church*”.)

So no, prayer isn’t the only function of the local church—but by saying that God’s house primarily is to be *a house of prayer* Jesus was emphasizing an important truth.

That our Heavenly Father desires to commune with us and meet our needs which is one of the ways He demonstrates His love for us—and prayer is what opens the windows of heaven and allows God to pour out on our lives all He wants to give us (Matt. 7:7-11).

But also, prayer brings us into direct contact with God and allows His power to flow from Him into and through our lives

James 5:16 (NLT)

¹⁶ ...The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

No great work of God has ever been done apart from prayer—and no great work for God will ever be accomplished apart from prayer.

Not in your walk with God, your marriage, in the lives of your children, or in this church as a whole—and yet prayer has become the neglected weapon of the Christian arsenal.

One pastor put it this way—

“Churches today are packed for concerts or pot-lucks or special events—but announce a prayer meeting and a few faithful saints trickle in.”

No wonder the church is so powerless—it's because it's so prayer-less.

Pastor Charles Stanley—

"If people in America would spend 1/10 of the time on their knees that they spend watching T.V.—God would bring about an awakening in America that would shake every square inch of this globe. It is a sin for Christians who have heard the gospel over and over and have seen God answer prayer to sit down and watch 1, 2, 3 or 4 hours of T.V.—filling their minds with the world and then crawl into bed and whisper, 'Lord bless me tomorrow, help me with my job, bless my family, take care of my kids, supply my needs in Jesus name' as they're on their way to sleep."

2. The Church is to be a place of worship

Matthew 21:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "

The word *prayer* in v.13 is the general word for making requests known to the Lord—but it also carries with it the idea of *adoration, devotion*—or in other words *worship*.

So not only is the Church to be a *house of prayer*—it is also to be a place of **worship**.

John 4:23 (NKJV)

²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

We will look at the subject of worship in detail when we get to John 4—so I'll save any further comment on worship until then.

I will say this—it's a lot more than just singing songs to God.

So first of all, the Church, which is the temple of the living God today, is to be a place of prayer and worship.

3. The Church is to be a healing place

Matthew 21:12, 14 (NKJV)

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves... ¹⁴ Then *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

When I say that the church is to be a healing place—I don't mean primarily physical healing—although God still heals many today from physical infirmities.

And certainly verse 14 does indicate that Jesus healed the blind and lame physically that came to Him.

But by Matthew only mentioning the **blind** and **lame** that Jesus healed in the temple when there were obviously many more who no doubt came to Him that were suffering from other kinds of diseases and infirmities.

I see in this that the Holy Spirit wants us to broaden our understanding of the church as a healing place to include the healing of the '*spiritually blind and lame*'.

The spiritually **blind** would be a reference to unbelievers; and the **lame** could be a reference to believers who's walk is somehow impaired maybe by sin or emotional trauma or depression which has 'crippled' their walk with the Lord.

And so, the Church is to be a place of **evangelism** where unbelievers can come and hear the true gospel so that their eyes might be opened spiritually and that they might be able to see for the first time in their life that God has made them on purpose for a purpose—an eternal purpose.

But also a Spirit-filled church is to be a place where the spiritually “lame” (the weak, the weary, the broken, and the down-trodden) can come and know they’re not going to be judged or ‘kicked’ when they’re down but that others in the body will stoop down, pick them up and help them to walk until they are strong enough to walk on their own again.

Galatians 6:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

“Overtaken”—“*caught up; tripped up*”

“Trespass”—this doesn’t refer to a long-term sin, but speaks of someone who wants to do what’s right, who is trying to live rightly before God—but is weak and stumbles occasionally in their walk.

In this case the response of the church should be to stoop down and help them up through encouragement and love in an effort to restore them.

I’m not talking about those who are living in ongoing, unrepentant sin—our response to them should be to rebuke and disfellowship them if they won’t repent.

I’m talking about those who desperately want to walk with God but have something that is hindering or ‘crippling’ them in their walk.

Galatians 6:1 (NKJV)

¹ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, **you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...**

“Restore”—the Greek word means to “put in order” so as to restore to its former condition.

It was used in secular Greek as a medical term for setting a fractured or dislocated bone.

It's a word that was used in Mark 1:19 of the apostles who were 'mending' their nets.

There are a lot of people that have been beaten up pretty badly in life and they need a loving, nurturing environment—a spiritual and emotional trauma center where they can come to be mended and healed—that's what the Church is to be to them.

Instead many churches are full of legalistic Christians who are critical hearted and condemning towards the faults and failures of weaker brethren because that's what legalism does—it compares itself with others and those who are weaker are looked down upon.

You see grace says, *"I know I'm weak and can't do anything apart from God's grace. And just as He has been patient with my weaknesses and failings—I now want to show that same patience, kindness and grace towards others who are weak in their walk with Him".*

Legalism on the other hand says, *"I'm worthy, I'm able, and if I can do it I expect everyone else to live like me—and if they don't they don't deserve anything from God like I do."*

1. The Church is to be a house of prayer

2. The Church is a place where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth

3. The Church is to be a healing place

We will finish looking at what the temple of God today, the Church, is to be if it is going to fulfill and purpose for which He created it.