

The Fruit of True Worship

Mark 11:12-21

November 3, 2013

Introduction

God takes worship seriously. It is so serious that to cheapen His worship is to bring about punishment (and sometimes, even death).

Leviticus 10:1-3 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. **2** And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. **3** Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.

Note: What is this strange fire? NIV says unauthorized fire. In other words, God explained to them what to use and how to use such items in worship. They disregarded His command and did what they wanted to do. God killed them. God also did this in the NT.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

Why? He is jealous of His holy name. It is written in the first four Commandments on how to worship Him.

Exodus 20:2-7 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. **3** You shall have no other gods before Me. **4** You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **5** You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, **6** but showing love to a thousand of those who love Me and keep My commandments. **7** You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

He alone deserves all the attention. When we do the things that are outside His will, then we have offered up strange fire. He calls us to worship Him in the Spirit and in truth. True worship involves the Word of God and our response to it. What is the right response to His Words? Obedience

John 14:21 Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

Too often people have zeal but no knowledge, and this is a very dangerous thing. In fact, Paul says this about the Jews:

Romans 10:1-3 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. **2** For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. **3** Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Having effusive, zealous attitude alone does not make it true worship. If this is the only thing we have, then our worship is in vain. We remember last week (as we studied Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a colt) that the people were shouting "Hosannas" to Jesus, but their worship was in vain because in the end, they rejected Him as the Messiah and Lord. They had no knowledge in their zeal.

The passage we are studying today is Jesus' curse against the false religion of the Jews. Their religion merits their own righteousness as a means to salvation. Jesus preached repentance from their hypocrisy, and He often exposes their practice and understanding, bringing light to their darkness. He pronounces judgment on them because of their

false worship. He does this to reveal God's holiness and standards. He comes as the King of righteousness to attack the temple, the center of false worship.

Mark 11:12-21

12 *The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry.*

- Next day
 - After Jesus' humble entry into Jerusalem
 - Evening before, He had taken the time to survey the temple, planning out His actions
- Leaving Bethany
 - Bethany would be His home for the final week
- He was hungry
 - Humanity of Jesus
 - He knew what He was going to do

13 *Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to find out if it had any fruit. When He reached it, He found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.*

- Fig tree having leaves
 - Fig trees are everywhere in Israel
 - Normally the fruits come out before the leaves
 - This is early spring—much too early for figs
 - Mark says that it is not the season for the fruits (harvest is Aug – Oct)
 - This does not mean that there cannot be fruits on that tree—just not ripened figs
- Nothing but leaves
 - This was a barren tree
 - He was looking for some fruit to eat—but found none

14 *Then He said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And His disciples heard Him say.*

- The curse
 - Sounds extreme (some critics think Jesus threw a temper tantrum here)
 - He essentially kills the tree
 - To be clear, it was a curse (**v21**)—Peter recognized His words as a curse
- Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?
 - The tree had appearances of having fruits
 - Fruits come, then the leaves (so He was right in thinking that there might be some fruits on the tree)
 - His curse is actually a judgment—on what?
 - The temple and the whole religion of the Jews
- False Temple worship
 - Hypocritical worship
 - Appearance of true worship but no fruit
 - He pronounces a curse to destroy the temple

Luke 13:6-9 *Then He told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 8 "Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"*

Note: He tells this parable after hearing the Galileans dying in the hands of Pilate in Jerusalem. He points out that unless people repent, all are sinners, equally guilty and equally deserving of death.

- Judgment is also pronounced by John the Baptizer

Matthew 3:7-10 *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10*

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

- Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70
- What was the problem?
 - The first Temple was destroyed by Babylonians
 - because of idolatry
 - Herod's Temple—20 BC to 70 AD (80 years to build)
 - Because they trusted in their own righteousness for salvation
- Disciples heard Him say it

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves,

16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

17 And as He taught them, He said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

- This is the second cleansing of the temple
 - First cleansing is recorded in **John 2:13-25**

Note: Nothing has changed. The religious leaders are content in their own power.

- Background information
 - Pictures of Temple
 - Bazaars and shops in court of Gentiles

Note: Court of Gentiles covered 37 acres!

- The priests ran a racketeering operation (had a cut from every transaction in Temple)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel temple tax
 - Must be approved coins
 - If Jew from other country, then they had to pay 25% exchange rates
 - Coins from Galilee were not accepted
 - Lambs and doves bought and sold
 - Only priests could approve the lambs
 - Outside animals were usually not approved
 - Buy lambs from temple area at 10 times the price
 - If poor, then can buy doves per **Leviticus 12**
 - However buy at much higher price (outside temple—5 cents; \$4 at temple—example)

Note: The priests were doing the exact same things as the Northern Kingdom of Israel were doing: abusing the poor to fatten their purse (**Amos**).

- Other merchandise
 - Oil, wine, salt, and other items needed for Passover
- Noisy, chaotic place
 - Animals all over the place—approved and rejected animals
 - About 250,000 lambs sacrificed at Passover each year
- Jesus curses the temple
 - He is angry—furious
 - Overturns tables, scattering money everywhere
 - He stops people from carrying merchandise into the temple
 - He throws everybody involved with this enterprise out of the temple

Note: This is a frightening image of God's wrath. It is controlled fury unleashed at the temple operation. This is a divine act because the temple officials are powerless to stop Him nor could they arrest Him. Jesus does this by divine authority.

- Why?
- House of worship
 - The temple is to be a house of prayer, a quiet place for meditation of His Word

Psalms 27:4 One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.

1 Kings 8:29 May Your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which You said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that You will hear the prayer Your servant prays toward this place.

- For all nations
 - Including the Gentiles, since they have no place to worship

1 Kings 8:41-43 As for the foreigner who does not belong to Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your name— **42** for men will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple, **43** then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of You, so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears Your Name.

- Jews often excluded them from worship

Note: God's intent was that the Jews be the light unto the Gentiles so they will know His name and worship Him.

- Den of thieves (from **Jeremiah 7:11**)
 - Religious leaders take advantage of the people because they could not speak out against them

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill Him, for they feared Him, because the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching.

19 When evening came, they went out of the city.

- Religious leaders
 - They are afraid and they are panicky
- Back to Bethany

20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree You cursed has withered!"

- What Jesus cursed shall be destroyed

Conclusion

What is true worship? It certainly is not at the temple of Jerusalem. Jesus had this discussion with the woman at the well in Samaria. She told Him that they worship God at the mountain. But Jesus tells her that there will not be a sacred place of worship.

John 4:21 Jesus declared, "Believe Me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."

True worship is in the person who has believed in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. Their spirit is now under the control of the Holy Spirit of God.

John 4:23-24 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

The true worship begins at the cross of Jesus. There is no other way.