

THE RETURN OF THE KING

THE RISING // DARK

Luke 19:28-47 // Craig Smith

April 24, 2017

I BELIEVE IN CHRISTIANITY AS I BELIEVE THAT THE SUN HAS RISEN, NOT ONLY BECAUSE I SEE IT BUT BECAUSE BY IT I SEE EVERYTHING ELSE. - C.S. LEWIS

CRAIG: Welcome to Mission Hills and week number three of our six-part Easter series, The Rising. Today is kind of a special day in the church calendar. We call this Palm Sunday. I've gotta ask, how many of you grew up in churches where they actually gave you palm branches? And how many of you hit people with the palm branches? Yeah.

So, if you're not familiar with the idea of Palm Sunday, we celebrate Palm Sunday because on this Sunday, 2000 years ago, Jesus came into Jerusalem and His disciples, at least, welcomed Him by laying palm branches on the ground in front of Him, which is an ancient tradition for welcoming kings. They're welcoming Jesus as King. But, so we are gonna continue to see, because we are in this, this sort of dark period in the series, not everybody welcomed Him as King. It wasn't a universal welcome, and, in fact, I mean, if you paid any attention on news this morning, recognize that there are still people who are not at all happy to recognize Him as King. Some Coptic churches, early in our morning, as they went in to church to celebrate Palm Sunday, bombs went off. And so, a number of our brothers and sisters were killed this morning. And I think it's, it's necessary that we just take a moment to pray for them. Would you join me?

"Lord, we, we just grieve over the loss of life in those churches and we lift up those who lost loved ones. Those who were injured. We pray for healing, Lord. And we just, we recognize that not everybody is thrilled to call Jesus, King. And, in fact, there's active opposition to that. Lord, we're gonna, we're gonna go for the big ask and we are gonna ask that somehow you would do what only you can do. That you would turn these horrific acts into a, I dunno, into a breeding ground for something good. That somehow maybe the people who hear about these things, and in that country, would ask why would people be so opposed to this Jesus. And they would be led to look into who He is. What raises so much animosity and love, depending on which side of the fence you come down on. And then they will seek to understand why so much attention is focused on Jesus. They would come to understand Him, and to welcome him as King. So, Lord, please be with those who are grieving right now and bring good out of this evil. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Yeah, so not everybody welcomed Jesus as King, as we are gonna continue to see this morning. So, if you have a Bible, I would love to have you join with me in Luke, Chapter 19. We continue Jesus' journey on the road to the cross. And then what we are gonna see this morning is that He does something a little different as He comes into Jerusalem. Something He hasn't done before. Verse 29 says this, "As He approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you'll find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.'" Jesus is doing something very different here that we need to recognize, and that is He's asserting His authority, obviously. He hasn't really done that up to this point. In fact, up to this point when people have kinda, sorta put two and two together and realized who He was, His response to them has almost always been, "Shh, don't tell anybody." He really didn't wanna make too much of who He was yet. In fact, scholars recognize that it was such a...it's such a consistent way of acting, that we even have a name for it. We call it the Messianic Secret. That Jesus was the Messiah. He knew He was the Messiah but He didn't want much talk about it yet. But He's really reversing that here. He's no longer keeping things under wraps, and we see Him sort of asserting His authority obviously in two different ways. One is the way He's planning to enter into Jerusalem.

He tells His disciples to go and get a colt. And He's gonna ride this previously unriden colt into Jerusalem, which is a tradition



that ancient kings did. So He's clearly setting Himself up to come into Jerusalem in a kingly fashion, as a king.

But the other way that He asserts His authority is even just how He gets the donkey. If you picture the scene, it's a little bit odd, right? He's getting on His way towards Jerusalem. There's a couple little villages on the way first. And so, before He gets into the villages, He calls His disciples together. He gets a couple of them and says, "Hey, here's what I want you to do. I want you to go into that village you're about to get to, and you're gonna find a colt tied up there. And if you could just untie that and bring it back here, that'd be great." I mean, if you try to imagine what that was like for the disciples. I mean, they know Jesus is not from this village. He hasn't spent a lot of time here so there's very little chance that He's got like a donkey in storage in this village.

So, I kind of imagine Jesus says that and they sort of look at each other like, "Did...did Jesus just tell us to go steal a donkey? Because I'm sure that can't be right. That's really what it sounded like." You know. And so they probably look at Jesus and go, "Hey, you know, I don't wanna nitpick, but it's broad daylight. Chances are somebody is gonna see us, right? And He says, here's the deal, Verse 31, "If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' Just say, 'The Lord needs it.'" And I imagine their thought was, that's not gonna help.

And the Lord needs is a very good translation, probably accurate translation but the literal translation is actually interesting here, because literally what Jesus said is, "The Lord of it has need." "The Lord of it has need." The Lord of what? The Lord of the donkey. "Well, wait a minute. How are you the Lord of the donkey? How is it your donkey?" And the answer is, because He's King. He's King of Israel, which means that in some very real sense, everything, all of the donkeys are His.

And again, what we see Jesus doing is He's asserting His authority in a new way. He's asserting it boldly in a way that we haven't yet seen. And so they went. They were sent ahead and they found it just as He had told them. Now, as they were untying the colt, it's owners asked them, "Why are you untying that colt?" And they replied, "The Lord of it needs it?" And the interesting thing is we don't really get any details about how that conversation went. They end up with the donkey and I'm assuming it's not because they didn't just run off at that point. Like, "Hey, look what's going on over there." And then they just took off with the donkey, okay? I don't think that's what happened which suggests that the people, they surrendered the donkey to Jesus, which gives us some hope that there's gonna be at least some positive response to Jesus' authority as King.

"When they came near the place where the road, they brought it to Jesus. They threw their cloaks on the colt and they put Jesus on it. And as they went along, they spread their cloaks on the road." Now, Luke doesn't mention the palm branches. A couple of the other Gospels do. So it's both palm branches and cloaks, both of which were traditions by which ancient kings were welcomed into cities.

Now, "When He came near the place where the road goes down to the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen." They said, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." And we often call this scene the "Triumphal Entry." And for good reason, because Jesus is entering as a triumphant king. He is going in on an un-previously unriden colt. That's a kingly thing to do. He's walking over branches and cloaks that His followers had set out. That's a triumphant king kind of a thing to do. They are using language. We've seen them use the word, Lord, and now we're seeing language like, King. They are singing, "Hosanna, save us." So, there's a very clear sense in which there is a triumphant element to this, but it's not a universally triumphant element. Not everybody is thrilled with what's going on here.

And so, in verse 39, we see this, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' He replied, 'If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'" And here's where we begin to see that it's not all fun and games. It's not all positive. The Pharisees hear what's going on and their response to Jesus is, you gotta shut your disciples up. You gotta get them to be quiet. And I think there's probably a couple of things going on there. One of them is that they're afraid.



This is Holy week and thousands and thousands of people are coming into Jerusalem from all over the country of Israel. And whenever lots of people assemble like that, Rome gets a little bit nervous. And so Rome would have sent out lots of soldiers and they would have been kind of watching things, monitoring things, making sure no rebellion was going on. Making sure things weren't getting out of hand. And Rome was not what you called precise when it came to punishing people they thought were rebelling. What they had a tendency to do was to go, "Oh, that village, there's rebellion kind of seething over there?" And they would just kill hundreds of thousands from the village as a lesson to everybody else. And so the Pharisees are a little bit nervous. They're going, "Hey, you know, if they hear these disciples calling out about the king, they are gonna think that we're, we're forming a rebellion here and they're gonna punish all of us." And so, they're afraid. And as we talked about last week, what we fear determines how we act. They were much more afraid of Rome than they were of Jesus, of God.

But the second reason I think that they were trying to get the disciples to shut up was just that they'd already made their mind up. They'd already decided Jesus wasn't the king they'd been looking for. So they thought the disciples were doing blasphemy. Assigning titles, and honor, and even worship to this man that they were convinced was not the king that they'd been looking for.

You know, if you're not familiar with the Pharisees, by the way, the Pharisees were one of the major religious groups in first century Israel. And throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus and the Pharisees just butting heads constantly. Which is kind of interesting because, on the surface, at least, Jesus and the Pharisees should have been allies. They were remarkably similar in a lot of ways. Both Jesus and the Pharisees believed that the Bible was the inspired Word of God. And they were both very conservative in their interpretation. Both Jesus and the Pharisees believed that their faith in God should permeate every area of their lives. In spite of those similarities, Jesus and the Pharisees clashed constantly. And at the risk of oversimplifying it, the reason that they clashed was simply Jesus' mission. They disagreed with Jesus' mission. Jesus was very clear about His mission. He said, "I came to seek and to save the lost."

The Pharisees weren't very interested in the lost. In fact, the lost was kind of a broad category of people that they considered to be off limits. Out of bounds for God's grace and mercy. I mean, you know, it was people they called sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes, and the poor, and the foreigners, the Gentiles. All those people. See, the Pharisees had a long list of people to be avoided, and Jesus came along and He looked at the Pharisees' list and Jesus saw their list of people to be avoided, and He saw it as a list of people to be loved. It's almost like He took their list of people to be avoided and went, "This shall be my new mission. You say I should avoid those people? I'm gonna reach out to those people. These people you're supposed to stay away from? I'm absolutely going to hang out with those people. These people are out of bounds for God's grace? No, no, no, no. These people are gonna be the people that I extend God's grace to." So, He saw their list of people to be avoided as a list of people to be loved, and they clashed.

And we begin to see that intensify here. So this Jesus comes in and the people are crying, "King." And the Pharisees go, "You need to shut your people up." Because they had decided He wasn't King. In fact, you notice the language change? We'd seen Jesus call Himself, Lord. The people were calling Him, Lord. They were also calling Him, King. But how did the Pharisees address him? As teacher. It's a respectful title but it's not an exulted one. And it's clearly in contrast, as they are saying, "You're not the king that we've been looking for." And so, they told Jesus, you need to shut them up.

And Jesus isn't willing to do that. In fact, He says, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out," which is an interesting statement. You know, what's He saying? Is He's saying that if people don't praise me, then, like, inanimate objects will start singing? That would have been interesting, right? Like everybody else gets quiet and all of a sudden, you know, like the rocks are like, "Wo, oh, oh." I don't know what rocks sound like, right? But, but is that really what Jesus is saying here. I actually don't think it is. Jesus is doing something here that was an ancient teaching technique. What He was doing was He was...He was repeating part of a familiar quote, part of a familiar passage of Old Testament scripture.

He's only quoting part of it because the idea was that you quote part of something people are familiar with and they fill in the blanks because they remember the rest of it. And we might be able to do it. Let's try it. "An apple a day..."



Together: “Keeps the doctor away.”

Man 2: Okay. See, I don't need to say the whole thing. I can make the point by going, you know, what they say, they say an apple a day...and you, you already, you sort of make the lesson for yourself. Jesus is actually quoting from the Book of Habakkuk in the Old Testament here, Chapter 2. He's quoting just a snippet of it but He expects His audience, who are so familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures to fill in the rest of it. We may not be quite as familiar so it's probably worth looking at. Habakkuk, chapter 2, says this, “Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin. You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. The stones of the wall cry out.” There's the stones crying out. “And the beams of the woodwork echo it saying, ‘Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice.’” See there was...He quoted the part there, oh, the stones cry out, and they would have...were made to remember this part here. And in this passage, the stones aren't crying out the praise of God. The stones are crying out a condemnation against the people who hide inside the walls and say, “We're the people of God.” And yet, their lives don't indicate that they're really the people of God. This isn't about praise. This is about a warning. And I'm pretty confident this is what He meant for them to take away because of what happens next.

“As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it. And He said, ‘If you, even you, had known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it's hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.’”

We get three things here. We get passion, problem, and prediction. Passion. Problem. Prediction. We see passion because when Jesus topped the rise and He finally got a glimpse of the Holy city of Jerusalem, the capital, the center of life for all of God's people. When He saw it, what did He do? He wept. And the word here for weeping, it's not a word that says that, you know, His eyes got a little moist. Doesn't even mean maybe a tear roll; this is a sobbing word. This is the word that demonstrates that what He felt at this moment was deep. It was passionate. We only actually see Jesus described as doing this two times in His ministry. One time was when He was confronted with the death of His good friend, Lazarus. And the other time is right here. There is a depth of emotion that comes welling up out of Him, because He's looking at this city and He understands where it's headed. He understands what's coming. He understands that this warning from Habakkuk is going to take place, because there is a problem. And the problem, as He says, He says the problem is you didn't know what would bring you peace. If you had only known it would bring you peace, then the warning of Habakkuk wouldn't have come to pass. What Habakkuk told you was gonna happen if you didn't get right with God, it didn't have to go that direction, but that's the direction it's going because you didn't know it would bring you peace.

And I think the answer is pretty obvious here, in terms of what peace is. It's him. Had they understood Him for who He was, had they embraced him as their king, then they would have been experiencing peace, and He would have protected them from all of their enemies. He goes on to say, it's not just that they didn't recognize their king. He says at the end, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. Not just did they not see Jesus as the king they had been waiting for, but they didn't see Jesus as the very God that they claimed to worship and to love. And so He gives a prediction. He says, because you didn't embrace what would have brought you peace, because you didn't recognize me, because you didn't understand that I was the very God that you've been claiming to follow, there are gonna be downsides. There's gonna be consequences. There's gonna be something other than peace.

And He's not happy about it. Understand. He's not going, “Yeah, good for you, you're gonna get what you got coming to you.” That's not what He's saying. He's weeping over it. He's just recognizing, that's the path their choosing to walk. And so He gives this prediction. He says, “The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you on every side. They'll dash you to the ground. And they will not leave one stone on another.” And that's exactly what happened. In 70 AD, the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem, they built embankments against the walls, and they destroyed the



city so completely, that even political writers from that day have left records saying that there was not one stone of the walls of Jerusalem left sitting on top of another one. And in that way, the stones cried out in mute testimony against the people who hid inside their walls and said, "We're the people of God." But in fact, they couldn't even recognize the God that they claimed to follow.

And we got to wrestle with the question, like, what went wrong? Because it's a scary thing, isn't it? It's a scary thing to think about being a people who...who's very source of identity is, "We're the people of God. We follow God. We obey God. We serve God." And yet, when that God showed up, they were like, "I don't even know who you are." Like, how do you get that far off track? And I think the answer is that they couldn't recognize Jesus for who He was because they had forgotten who God is. You hear me? They couldn't recognize Jesus for who He was because they had forgotten who God is. They had forgotten what God cares about. They had forgotten what's important to God. They had forgotten what breaks God's heart. They had forgotten what gives God joy. They had forgotten who God cared about. And so they couldn't see that Jesus was the very God that they claimed to follow.

And so Jesus entered into Jerusalem and He went immediately to the temple. And when Jesus entered the temple courts, He began to drive out those who were selling. 'It is written.' He said to them. "My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of robbers." Such an interesting scene, because, again, in some ways, it's a little bit different Jesus, isn't it? This is an angry Jesus, which is a little hard, as I think, for us to wrap our heads around. And if it's hard for us in the church, it's even harder for those people outside the church.

Sometimes I get to speak on college campuses, and one of my favorite things to do on a secular college campus is to just...to get a group of students and we'll get, like a black board or a white board and I go, "Hey, just give me one word descriptions of Jesus." And it always kind of starts out the same way, they say, you know, "He always compassion." And I'll write compassion into there. "Oh, you know, He's merciful. He's merciful. He's..." you know, "He's pleasant." All right, He's pleasant. And, you know, and after five or six, they just start...they start kind of reaching. "He's good mannered." Okay. "He's got great personal hygiene." Okay. "He's nice. He's..." And when it's all done, and this never fails, it always works this way. I can step back from the board and I go, "Congratulations, you've just described the world's biggest hippie." It's like you had this picture of Jesus that He's just the nicest guy in the world. He'd never really, you know, he'd never go off on anybody. He'd never get upset. In fact, you get the idea that He probably didn't even walk anywhere. He probably skipped. With a flower tucked behind His ear somewhere.

And then...and I, and I either read this story, or my favorite one is actually John's description. Because John gives us a little bit more detail. John says He made a whip. And He chased the people out with a whip. And on a college campus, after we've described the big hippie, Jesus, when I read that, you can see them like, "Dude, that, that doesn't sound right." And some of them are like, "Was it a soft whip?" "Well, it wasn't a soft whip." It's just that they can't reconcile the picture of Jesus that they are so familiar with, with the picture that God's Word actually gives us.

Jesus is angry. Now, He hasn't lost His temper. He's not out of control. This is a very deliberate thing, but you need to understand, He's mad. He's angry. And the question is, what's He angry about? I mean, we know it has something to do with these sellers. But, what's wrong with what they're doing? Because the interesting thing about the sellers is they were performing a necessary function. What they were selling were the sacrifices, which were required for worship in the temple. People, most, for the most part, the average person in Jerusalem, and in Israel at large, they didn't have access to the sacrifices. They saved all year to be able to buy the sacrifices. And when they came and they were able to buy them and to make those sacrifices to the temple. The other thing they were doing, we know from a couple of the other Gospels, is there were money changers who had to be there because there was only a particular kind of coin that was accepted in the temple. And so they had to change their everyday currency for the temple coin. So, both the people selling sacrifices and the people doing the money changing had legitimate functions, necessary functions.

So what's wrong here? Why is Jesus chasing them out with a whip? Well, He tells us exactly why. And He does it in exactly the same way that He dealt with that little bit from Habakkuk. He cites just a small portion of a familiar saying. Familiar passages



from the Old Testament that He calls our attention to by giving quick little quotes. The first one comes from Isaiah 56, “And He called their attention to it when He said, ‘my house will be a house of prayer.’” We may not be as familiar with it, so let’s take a look at what Isaiah says that He was calling their attention to. He says this, “Let no foreigner, that’s a Gentile, let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, ‘The Lord will surely exclude me from His people.’ Let no eunuch complain, ‘I’m only a dry tree.’” And understand that foreigners, Gentiles and eunuchs, those are two good examples of people that were kind of off limits for God’s...from the way that people in first century Israel tended to think. But God says, “Let no foreigner think that he has no place in my house, because he does. Let no eunuch think that he has no legacy to leave, because he does.” For this is what the Lord says, “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths and who choose what pleases me, and hold fast to my covenant, to them, I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. And foreigners, Gentiles, who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to Him, to love the name of the lord and to be His servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant, these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” And that was the part that they would have immediately thought of and then they would have thought about the larger context. When Jesus said, “My house is to be called a house of prayer,” and they would have gone, “For all nations.”

What Jesus is doing is He’s reminding them of their very purpose. That the reason why there is a temple, the reason why there is a nation of Israel...see the temptation was to begin to believe that God must have loved the Israelites more, that’s why He chose them. But the reality is that God didn’t choose the Israelites because He loved them more than the rest of the nations, more than the Gentiles. God chose the Israelites because of how deep His love for the nations was. His, His selection of the Israelites was to make them a city on a hill. It was to raise them up so they could be light in the darkness.

In fact, when God called Abraham, who’s the ancestor of all of the Jewish people, what He said to them was this. He said, “I will bless you, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Yeah, I love you and I love them. I love them so much that I’m gonna raise you up so that people can see who I am through you. I’m gonna bless you so that you could pour that blessing on others. I’m gonna pour grace upon you so that you can be an agent of grace to all of the world.” That’s why there was a nation of Israel and that’s why there was a temple. And Jesus is reminding them of that. Because somehow or other they’d gotten off track. They’d gotten out of sync with God’s heartbeat when it came to: the Gentiles, the foreigners, the sinners, the unlovable.

And I think we have to pause at this moment and recognize that the reason that God selected the nation of Israel to be a light to the world is very, very similar to the reason that He raised up this thing that we call the Christian Church. The church is not Israel. It’s not the replacement for Israel. They’re two different groups. But there is a lot of overlap between them. You see God’s heart beating similarly through both of them. The church exists because God poured grace into us so that we would be agents of grace to the rest of the world. I’ve said it before but, I mean, I will say it again. I’m gonna keep saying it because it’s so critical that we not forget it. Reaching the lost is not one of the programs of the church. It is the central purpose for which the church was called into existence in the first place. And if we forget that, it’s not just that we are gonna lose out on some opportunities to do some good things, if we forget why we were called into existence, we run the risk of frustrating Jesus as much as He was frustrated that day.

The second thing that He quotes, when He talks about a den of robbers is actually from Jeremiah 7, which says this, “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. ‘Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house, the temple, and there proclaim this message,’ hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says: reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, ‘This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.’” Don’t think that just by repeating it over and over again it becomes true. “If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land that I gave your ancestors forever and ever.” “But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. Where you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense



to Baal and follow other gods that you've not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, 'we are safe,' safe to do all these detestable things? Has my house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? 'But I have been watching,' declares the Lord." And that's the part. When He said, den of robbers, I would have immediately remembered, "But I have been watching," says the Lord. "I've been watching. I've been waiting. And you have been found wanting. My house is not what it's supposed to be. The temple is not functioning as it intended to function. My people are not accomplishing what I called them into existence to accomplish. Something's gone wrong."

And Jesus reminds them of all this as He declares His frustration. And He uses harsh language, and it's even harsher than we might not actually recognize. Jesus didn't say, it's a den of thieves. He said it's a den of robbers. Thieves steal by secrecy. They sneak in and take. Robbers, though, the Greek word for robbers that gets used here, though, is people who steal by violence. They don't sneak in. They come right to your face. They knock you down and they take what they want. It's an "in your face" kind of theft. It's armed robbery. He says, "It's not just that you're doing it subtly. It's not just that you're taking what isn't yours." He says, "You're doing it violently." What's He talking about? What is it He's so upset about? Why are the sellers and the money changers, why have they gotten His anger up so high?

As we said, they are performing necessary functions, so what's the big deal? And the answer is, it's not what they were doing. It's where they were doing it. See, God cared so much about the rest of the world. He cared so much about the lost. He cared so much about those that the Israelites had begun to write off as unlovable, that He decreed in His Word that when the temple was built, there would be place in the temple where those foreigners could come to worship. Over the years, it came to be called the court of the Gentiles. It was a place where Gentiles could come and they could hear the Word of God. They could hear how great He was. How powerful He was. How loving He was. How merciful and gracious He was. They could contemplate His greatness and His mercy, and they could worship the God of Israel as their God.

God decreed that the temple would have a place where that would happen. And guess where the selling was happening? It was happening in the court of the Gentiles. Which meant, on that day that Jesus went in, and He went into that court where the Gentiles could come and to hear the greatness of God, instead of hearing much of the greatness of God, what He heard were things like this, "Hey, you're my first customer of the day. I have a good deal for you. I have got the best lambs in all Jerusalem." "No, no, don't listen to that guy. His lambs are fake, he's painting over the spots. You don't want that one. I've got the most spotless lambs in all...you come in here, I'll give you a good deal. I've got the best deals. You know what? You buy a lamb from me, I'll throw in two doves, no...how about three doves. No, no, don't walk away from me." This is what's going...can you imagine worshipping in that kind of a setting? The answer is, you can't.

Their opportunity to worship the God of Israel had been robbed from them. And so He began to chase them out. But make sure you understand. It's not just what they were doing. And it's not even just where they were doing it. It's why they were allowed to do it right there. Why were they allowed to do it in the court of the Gentiles? Why were they allowed to do it in the place that had been set aside for the foreigners and the aliens to come and to hear the mercies of God? Because the people in charge said, "Who cares what happens there? Who cares if they don't have the opportunity to really contemplate or to meditate on God's word? Who cares if it's a cacophony and chaos? Who cares...because pious Jewish men and woman still had other places they could go and they could do their worship. So really, who cares what happens in the court of the Gentiles? Who cares about the Gentiles?" God cares about the Gentiles. God cares about the lost. God cares about those that we say are unlovable. Jesus cares deeply for them.

It wasn't what they were doing. It wasn't even exactly where they were doing it. It was the heart that said, "Who cares about these?" Because, the hearts that say, who cares about these, were hearts that were marching to a drum that's very different than God's heartbeat. And if nothing else, what we have to understand this morning is this, that to follow Jesus, to really follow Jesus, not to be, to be camping on empty words. To really follow Jesus we have to march to the beat of His heart. Do you hear me? To really follow Jesus we have to march to the beat of His heart, which means we have to care about what He cares about. We have to love the people that He loves. We have to be heartbroken about the things that break His heart. We have to be joyful



about the things that break His heart, and where we're not, we have to recognize we're kidding ourselves. We're not following Jesus. We're following something else entirely. To really follow Jesus, we have to march to the beat of His heart. And His heart beats for the lost and the broken, the hurting, the ones that we write off as unlovable and unreachable. He says, "If you're gonna follow me, you're gonna have to sync up to my heartbeat."

So next week is Easter. And I'm gonna make you a promise right now, that if you are a follower of Jesus, when you come here next week, you are gonna get to celebrate your brains out. That sounds rough. But I want you to know that...that when we celebrate the resurrection, we're gonna really celebrate the resurrection. This is gonna be an opportunity for those of us who call Jesus, Lord, and King, we are gonna celebrate like crazy next week. But we are out of sync with His heartbeat if we're not also very conscious of the fact that on Easter there will be thousands of people who come into this place and in other churches around the world, that don't know Jesus as King. They don't know His love for themselves. And if we don't care about them, and in fact, if we act in ways that create obstacles to them, we're fooling ourselves about following Jesus.

So what I would like to do here as we close out our time is actually invite you to just pray with me. I'm gonna ask you to join me in prayer for three things. Number one, just that God would show us ways that our hearts are not beating with His. We don't care about what He cares about. And in our prayer time, I just encourage you to confess the ways that you're not marching to the beat of His heart and ask Him to sync you back up. The second thing is to pray for the lost that will be here next weekend. Yeah, we're gonna celebrate, but we want the lost to hear the Gospel. And we wanna make sure that we're not obstacles to that. So, pray that God would save them, that they would come in here not knowing Jesus. Maybe they'd come in here with no intention of getting to know this Jesus, but they'd walk out of here in an eternity changing relationship with Him. Pray for them.

And third, just ask God to lead you in ways to help reach the lost next week. You know, maybe that's volunteering in some way. Maybe it's taking those cards on the way out and inviting somebody. He may reveal a number of things to you. But I wanna encourage you, just for the next couple minutes. You can do it in your seats. If you'd like to come down here and make sort of a public time of prayer, then love to have you join me at the steps here. But for the next couple of minutes, let's just pray together that God would sync up our heartbeats with His. As we go into this week where we celebrate how deeply we've been loved.

Would you join me for the next couple of minutes and then we'll close with the last song.

"Jesus, we call you King and we recognize your authority over our lives. And we recognize and we give you thanks for the love that you have for us. That you came to seek and save us when we were lost. And Lord, as we come into this week where we contemplate what that cost you, we give you thanks. And we ask that you would, you can sync our hearts with yours. That we would care about who you care about, that we would love those that you love. That we would serve as you served. And that we'd be your instruments of grace, even as we have received it. Lord, we pray for the coming week and this coming weekend, when we know that so many will come into this place. And some of them, probably dragged here by family and friends. Some of them not quite sure why they're here. But Lord, we know why they're here. And we ask that your Holy Spirit would come and fill this place in power next weekend. That many who do not know you would leave knowing you, with their eternity changed, because they hear and receive the truth. And we lift up the lost who will be in our presence and we ask that you give them soft hearts. And we ask the same thing for ourselves, Lord. Would you mold us this week so that nothing we do would be an obstacle to people seeing you for who you are. And Lord, if there are ways that we can not only not be an obstacle, but we can be of assistance. That we can be a picture of you that shows them the truth of the Gospel. Lord, would you show us how to do that. Sync our hearts with yours so that we love as you've loved, and we serve as you serve. And in that way we march to the beat of your heart because you are our King. In His name we pray. Amen."

