

---

---

# Sermon Notes

March 25, 2018

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

---

## A House of Prayer

Matthew 21:10-13

### Housekeeping

- ❖ As we move into a new season marked by new life and brighter days, many do "spring cleaning"
- ❖ Spring cleaning for the soul
  - keeping our spiritual lives in "tiptop" shape
  - an element of housekeeping in the familiar Palm Sunday narrative that is easy for us to overlook

### The Setting and The Scene

- ❖ Festive, parade, great expectations, triumphalism
  - waving branches
  - spreading cloaks on the road
  - cries of *Hosanna* = "Lord save us" (quotation from Psalm 118)
- ❖ People are desperate for a Messiah
  - Israel is nothing more than a puppet state of Rome

- at Passover, the rooftops surrounding the Temple are manned with 600 Roman soldiers
- ❖ Despite the overbearing, overshadowing political power of Rome, the Jewish people do not give up hope
  - the ancient prophecies promise that a better day is coming
  - a Savior will come... God's Messiah (Zech 9:9, Is 40:10)
- ❖ Finally, it seems like the day has arrived!
  - what will He do first?
  - how will He put these pagans in their place once and for all?

### Surprise!

- ❖ Jesus **doesn't** go to the Roman fortress... Jesus goes to the Jewish Temple
- ❖ As Jesus enters the Temple, He goes on a rampage
  - overturning tables and benches
  - cleaning house
  - *It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers.*
  - Jesus goes straight to the centerpiece of Jewish worship
    - Jesus is not concerned with the people's relationship with Rome
    - Jesus is concerned with people's relationship with God

- ❖ Jesus drives out people who provide a service people need in order to facilitate their worship and sacrifice
  - in earlier times money changers and those who sold animals for sacrifice are located in the Kidron Valley
  - as a matter of convenience, when Caiphas becomes High Priest, he lets the merchants move into the Temple
  - the issue is not only where business is being transacted, it is the price gouging that goes along with it
  - money changers charge exorbitant interest as they convert Roman and Greek coins into the coin for the Temple tax
- ❖ Those who should be helping others in their worship and service to God are exploiting and taking advantage of them

### A House of Prayer

- ❖ Prayer is the first principle of true worship
  - true worship is the aroma of people opening their hearts and coming to the Father in praise through petition and supplication
  - "you are undercutting the very reason the temple exists"
- ❖ True worshipers are those who approach God in spirit AND in truth (John 4:24)
  - **we are the temple of the living God** (2 Cor 6:16)
  - **we are the temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19)

- ❖ God's work from first to last is meant to be permeated with the aroma of prayer
  - not a house of preaching or a house of music, but a house of prayer
  - in Acts 2, the church is born during a prayer meeting
  - in Acts 4, when Peter and John are arrested, mistreated and released, their first stop is a prayer meeting (29-31)
  - when Paul writes to Timothy about the essential mechanics of ministry he says prayer is first of all (1 Tim 2:1,8)
  - the scene in heaven (Rev 5:8) shows how pleasing the fragrance of prayer is to Jesus
- ❖ Acts 2:42 is a summary of what the church is
  - prayer is what brings God's power and God's grace into every situation
  - ***You do not have, because you do not ask.*** (Jas. 4:2)

### Personal Application

1. What sort of housekeeping or spring cleaning is needed in your spiritual life at this time?
2. Is prayer the bedrock of your worship? Does prayer permeate the work God is doing within and through you? If not, what attitudes or habits do you need to reshape to make it so?
3. Are there any ways in which you are short cutting Jesus' call for you to worship Him in spirit and truth by doing things because they seem more pragmatic or convenient?