

Seeking To Destroy Him

Luke 19:41-48

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our text, Jesus entered the temple and drove out those who sold, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."

And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

Why? Why were the chief priests, scribes, and principal men seeking to destroy Him? What was the problem?

These were the leading men, collectively they were called the Sanhedrin. They had set up all sorts of rules that they felt would help people keep "the Law." These rules were set up to make God's law attainable, that it would be able to be done by people. All these rules however were only things that were outwardly observable.

Along comes Jesus! Jesus teaches that God's law, as handed down from Moses, was not intended to have even more rules attached to it, as if someone could outwardly accomplish them. Jesus shows God's intent is deeper! It is not just about an outward keeping of the law; it is a matter of the heart.

Jesus teaches that that keeping the Law is not simply what happens outwardly. It is also not simply what you do to break the law, but also what you fail to do. When we fail to love God and our neighbor we are also breaking the Law. And in regard to doing what we should not be doing, Jesus goes on to say that hearts and thoughts must also be kept pure, that matters of the heart and mind are as sinful as outward violations of the law.

And then Jesus went even further, He proclaimed forgiveness. But His forgiveness wasn't given just to those who had minor infractions against the law – Christ proclaimed to the worst sinners that they were forgiven.

Dear friends, the Sanhedrin knew it was impossible to tolerate. Jesus' teaching would destroy everything that they had done, their whole religious system would collapse. They would not be able to make money by exchanging currency and selling sacrificial animals at outrageous prices, making obscene profit. AND, forgiveness was being dispensed for free.

And maybe the worst consequence was that these church leaders were seen as just as bad as the terrible sinners, because they too were sinners in their hearts and minds. To have this itinerant, this non-establishment preacher, point this out to the whole world could not be tolerated! So, they were seeking to destroy Jesus.

But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. Why was Jesus at this place and point in time? Why was He where we find Him in our text?

Because this was all according to plan. This was all according to God's eternal plan.

God gave the Law through Moses in order that the promise given earlier might be all the more evident. The Law was given so that sin might become utterly sinful. Jesus comes and points out the severity of the Law in order that people might come to fully understand God's plan.

God's plan is to bring salvation to the human race – in Jesus Christ. All men are sinners – fully and completely. Man cannot save Himself! In the last chapter of Luke, Jesus responds to a young ruler's question by asking, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."

Every inclination of mankind's heart wants to believe they are good. There was confusion about that in the

church leadership of Jesus' day, and there is confusion about it today. They wanted to save their place, their standing in society, so they were seeking to destroy Jesus.

God's Christ came for a singular purpose though, He came that they might kill Him. It was God's plan that He come at this particular time to Jerusalem. These leaders – chief priests, scribes, and principle men of the people thought they were seeking to destroy Jesus for their own needs. However, these are those whom God foreknew would seek to destroy Jesus. It was God's plan that the fullness of time would come when they accomplish it.

It was at this time that God would use the vile wickedness of their hearts to be His instruments to bring about the salvation of all. They meant it for evil, but God was using it for good.

Are you also seeking to destroy Jesus, trying to get right with God on your own? Do you believe that repentance is your work? Do you believe that your repentance is an offering, your sacrifice for your sinfulness?

Are you also seeking to destroy Jesus by watering down the law so that you might somehow attain it, in order to appear good before men?

Are you also seeking to destroy Jesus, claiming you are not able to be forgiven, that your sinfulness needs more than just Jesus' suffering and death – that it needs your accomplishment as well? Your doing it better? Your doing it right? Your better repentance?

Are you also seeking to destroy Jesus, by feeling that receiving His Body and Blood in the sacrament too often makes the sacrament meaningless?

All these are ways we seek to destroy Jesus. No, we are not seeking to take His life. In fact, you and I confess that He is God, that He did indeed die for us.

But, when we try to take credit for things that only God does and can do, we are pointing to ourselves and we are trying to destroy Jesus and His work for us. When we diminish the greatness of God's gifts, when we believe they are just a Sunday thing and do not change our whole life, we are seeking to destroy Jesus.

God gave His Son to purchase forgiveness, and gives Him to us still to grant us salvation and eternal life. It is Christ who comes to us with amazing gifts.

This is God's house, Christ is present. Here we offer our prayers of faith.

We pray for forgiveness, repenting of our sins – Christ hears us and answers in the affirmative, delivering the forgiveness He purchased into our ears.

We pray for mercy – Christ hears us and speaks gracious words of life into our hearts.

We pray for Him to feed us – Christ hears us and gives us holy food, His flesh and His blood.

We pray our confession of faith – and what we believe is here done unto us.

It is my fervent prayer for you, dear friends, that you would be those who are hanging on Jesus' words. And that in them, as He has promised, you have life eternal. Amen.