

## E-Series

### Monday

**12** The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. **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. **14** Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his 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 money changers 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'? **17** But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" **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. **—Mark 11:12-19**

---

Every day this week, I will be sharing with you some reflections written by my friends James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte. He will guide us through this Holy Week.

When Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the high festival days, like Passover, he stayed with his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus in [Bethany](#). To people like us who drive everywhere, the two mile walk from Bethany to the temple precincts in Jerusalem is daunting: steep, rocky, up to [Bethpage](#), down the [Mount of Olives](#) into the [Kidron Valley](#), up into the city.

On Monday of Holy Week, Jesus made this walk, climbed the [south steps](#) (which have been excavated in recent years) to the [temple](#), and in a rage that startled onlooker, drove the moneychangers out of the temple. Was he issuing a dramatic memo against Church fundraisers? Hardly. He was acting out, symbolically, God's judgment on the temple. The well-heeled priests, Annas and Caiaphas, had sold out and were in the pockets of Rome. Herod had expanded the temple into virtually one of the wonders of the world – but he pledged his allegiance to Rome by placing a large golden eagle, symbol of Roman power, over its gate.

Jesus was not the first to denounce the showy façade of a faked religiosity of God's people. Through the centuries, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah, and John the Baptist had spoken God's words of warning to people whose spiritual lives were nothing more than going through the motions, assuming God would bless and protect them even though their lives did not exhibit the deep commitment God desired. God's prophets who spoke this way were not honored, but mocked, arrested, imprisoned, and even executed. Jesus was courting dangerous company.

On that Monday of the first Holy Week, Jesus shut down operations in the temple and – quite correctly! – forecast its destruction. Just forty years later, the grand building the people thought was indestructible was no more. No wonder the authorities wanted to kill Jesus. In a way, Jesus himself became the temple. The temple was the place, the focal point of humanity's access to God. Jesus, like the temple itself, was destroyed, killed – and his death, and then his resurrection on Easter Sunday, became our access to God.

James  
[james@mpumc.org](mailto:james@mpumc.org)



*Time to Shine in 2009!*

*Pastor Michael*