

E-Series

Monday



12 Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 13 "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.' " 14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. 16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, " 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?" 17 And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night." **–Matthew 21:12-17**

Once again, I will turn my keyboard over to my friend, The Reverend Dr. James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC for his reflections on each day of this holiest of weeks.

After the excitement and confusion of Palm Sunday, people had to be wondering what Jesus would do next. He woke up, ate, and made the two mile walk from Bethany, up the rocky incline to [Bethpage](#), down the [Mount of Olives](#) into the [Kidron Valley](#) and into Jerusalem.

Threading his way through the crowds, he made his way directly to the temple, climbing the [south steps](#) onto the splendid [stone plaza](#) around the temple (only recently completed by Herod's builders). Exploding with rage (surprising to us, if we imagine Jesus as sweet and gentle), Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple; onlookers had to have been shocked. Was he issuing a dramatic memo against Church fundraisers? Hardly. Money had to be exchanged in order to pay the shekel temple tax; so it wasn't about money. Jesus was acting out, symbolically and quite dramatically, God's judgment on the temple – or rather the ongoing charade that the people called their worship. Well-heeled priests turned healthy profits; Herod had transformed the temple into one of the wonders of the world – but pledged his allegiance to Rome by placing a large golden eagle, symbol of Roman power, over its gate. The people fell in line, went through the motions of worship, but were clueless about genuine life with God.

Jesus, like the [prophets of Old Testament times](#) and [John the Baptist](#), denounced the showy façade of faked religiosity; people assumed God would bless them, but made no deep or sacrificial commitment to God. Such prophets are never popular; they are mocked, arrested, imprisoned, and sometimes executed. The #1 reason the Romans, in cahoots with the religious authorities, killed Jesus by the end of that week, was this high drama on Monday morning; instead of repenting and going deep with God, they simply killed the messenger.

Jesus forecast the destruction of the temple; and just 40 years later, it was no more, [burned and reduced to rubble by Titus's legions](#). For Christians, Jesus actually became the temple, the place where God is found. His challenge from Holy Monday may have been best articulated by a non-Christian – Mahatma Gandhi. When asked by the Christian missionary [E. Stanley Jones](#) how the Church could gain a hearing in a Hindu country like India, Gandhi quite wisely replied, not with a clever technique to show others how they are wrong, but like this: "First, Christians must begin to live more like Jesus Christ. Second, practice your own religion without toning it down. Third, emphasize love and make it your working force."

In a way, Jesus was lucky to get out of the city alive; but instead of hiding, he came back on Tuesday and kept talking – as we will see.

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Check out this fascinating [bird's eye view of the area around Jerusalem](#) and where Jesus was each day (take from the New International Version Study Bible).

Trying to Walk with Jesus this Holy Week,

Pastor Michael