

# Small Group Questions

Matthew 21:12-17

**Sermon Title: Getting It Terribly Wrong**

Palm Sunday

Week of 25 March 2018

## Theme/Concept

There are many instances in history when people got it terribly wrong. It can be argued that Neville Chamberlain's naïve negotiations with Hitler most likely permitted Hitler to gain greater strength and conquer more land than he could have otherwise, thereby prolonging WWII and increasing the cost in lives beyond calculation. One characteristic I've noticed in studying Holy Week is that Jesus exhibits flashes of anger that clarify significant spiritual issues the people have gotten terribly wrong. Immediately following his "Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem," Jesus cleansed the Temple. He was angry because people had reduced and distorted religion from a relationship to a transaction (consumerism).

APPLICATION: Jesus entered our world to open our hearts to the ways of Life.

CHARGE: Let Jesus make things wonderfully right in your life.

## Opening Questions

After making each individual feel welcome to the small group, a question or series of questions like the following can give everyone an opportunity to participate, start thinking about a concept from the passage and gradually share more openly the deep work that God is doing in our lives.

- O1. How has society gotten it terribly wrong about spiritual things? What distortions of religion do you see?
- O2. How has Jesus recently made something wonderfully right in your life?
- O3. Have you ever had a perception about someone or something that you felt sure was right but later discovered that it was actually wrong?

## Scripture Reference: Matthew 21:12-17 (NIV84)

Background/Context:

Chapter 12 opens as Jesus is approaching Jerusalem with his disciples. He instructs two of them to secure a donkey and its colt from a nearby village, thus fulfilling prophesy (Zech 9:9). The disciples secure the animals, place their cloaks on them, and, as Jesus sits down, a very large crowd gathers, spreading their cloaks and tree branches on the road ahead of Jesus as He rides toward Jerusalem. All of Jerusalem is stirred as they learn that Jesus is riding to them and is surrounded by crowds shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Matthew's account implies that Jesus immediately entered Jerusalem while other accounts state that He went to Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, and returned the next morning.

<sup>12</sup>Jesus entered the temple courts 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. <sup>13</sup>"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.'"

<sup>14</sup>The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup>But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

<sup>16</sup>"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, LORD, have called forth your praise'?"

<sup>17</sup>And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

## Understanding the Scripture

A question like one of the following may help your group understand the content of the passage. Answering all of these questions exactly as written isn't necessary or recommended. Allow time for the application and Mission Statement questions.

- U1. Verse 12: If you were one of those spreading their cloaks before Jesus, where in Jerusalem would you expect Him to go and what would you expect Him to do? What authority did He claim by overturning the tables and benches? Is this the authority you would have expected Him to claim?
- U2. Verse 13: What was Jesus' point as He refers to scripture (optional: see Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11). What had they gotten terribly wrong?
- U3. Verse 14: Why didn't Jesus heal the blind and lame before He cleared the temple?
- U4. Verse 15: What does "Hosanna" mean? What does the name "Son of David" refer to? What were the children announcing as they shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David?" Why were the priests and teachers of the law indignant?
- U5. Verse 16: If you had been in the temple then, what do you think would have caused a bigger reaction: the healings, or the shouting children? What do you think the priests and teachers were thinking when they asked Jesus about the children?
- U6. Verse 17: Why do you suppose Matthew ends the conversation so abruptly? What might Jesus have been thinking about as He went back to Bethany? What might the priests and teachers have been thinking? What does Jesus leave you thinking?
- U7. Identify all the characters and people Matthew mentions in this passage. Which ones got it terribly wrong and why? Which ones got it right?

## Applying the Scripture

Small groups are a primary way of *building a community fully alive in Christ*. A small group facilitator can use questions like the following, adapted to the context of the particular small group, to help the group move beyond understanding the passage to allowing *Jesus Christ to fully change our lives* by the passage.

- A1. How often do you praise Him for Who He Is in addition to asking for what you want from Him?
- A2. Can you tell about something that was terribly wrong in your life and how Jesus set it wonderfully right?
- A3. What wrong thinking does Jesus need to overturn and set wonderfully right in your life?
- A4. As a believer, your body is a temple of God within you (1 Cor 6:19). What areas of your life do you need to ask Jesus to clean? To what or to whom have you granted authority over your temple?
- A5. What aspects of following Jesus have made you feel indignant and how will you ask God to transform that which is terribly wrong into something wonderfully right?

## Missional Strategy: Invite, Connect, Grow, and Serve

Use questions like the following, adapted to the context of your particular small group, to work toward the milestone for the year. **Milestone:** By this time next year each of us will have taken at least one step to become more like Jesus in our upward connection (connect), inner strength (grow) and outward focus (serve).

- M1. Who is God prompting you to bless by telling them about the wonderful things Jesus has done?
- M2. Who is God prompting you to come alongside to help overturn something that is terribly wrong and who needs Jesus' authority and power to set it right?
- M3. To whom does God want you to listen so He can bless you as that person calls forth His praises?
- M4. If you were to take inventory of your connections with people and with God, which connections would reveal a vibrant relationship and which ones might be transaction-based, where you give to get?
- M5. In what ways is God inviting you into a more vibrant relationship with Him through scripture, prayer, and the people and circumstances He brings into your life?

## Closing Prayer

If your small group prays together, some of the following concepts might be helpful to invite the Holy Spirit to help each member of the group grow in areas that may have come up during the group's discussion. Pray:

- That the Holy Spirit would show each group member any thoughts, words, or deeds that might be terribly wrong and need to be set wonderfully right through the power and authority of Jesus Christ.
- That God would open our eyes, ears, and hearts to the many blessings God has given us and be ready to open our mouths to declare the wonderful things He has done.
- That God would open our hearts to value others for who they are (relationship) rather than what they can do for us (consumerism).