

# Acts 19:45-48

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[ 0 : 00 ] Imagine, if you will, cast your mind back or try and place yourself a couple of thousand years ago in Jerusalem. And three friends are having lunch somewhere in a pub in Jerusalem.

And they're discussing events that had been going on that morning. Extraordinary events that had gone on in the temple that morning.

Then, Rabbi Jesus, better known by some as the rabble-rousing rabbi, had been in the temple. And in the temple, he had overturned the table of the money changers.

He had thrown out those who were buying and selling. And he had basically caused a great commotion, much to the disgust of many. And it was the talk of the town.

Our three friends, having their lunch there in Jerusalem, were talking about it. They had been there. They had seen the events from a safe distance.

[ 1 : 02 ] But they had seen it all. And they had seen how Jesus, having created this great scandal, then proceeded to preach a very acceptable, a very powerful sermon.

And the people were hanging on his every word. When you can introduce your sermon in that way, it's not surprising that people hang on your every word.

Well, our friends in the pub in Jerusalem also have a captive audience because they were there.

And others miss the spectacle. So, the others there hadn't the good fortune of maybe having been born 2,000 years later when they would have seen the whole thing on YouTube in the afternoon.

They didn't have that facility. So, they'd missed the event of the day in Jerusalem. And so, our friends who were witnesses have a captive audience also as they share all that had happened.

Now, the whole thing was actually quite frightening. It was very intense. And so, there is a sense in which they feel happy to be able to be the center of attention and tell their friends and those who aren't their friends also all that they had seen.

[ 2 : 19 ] They are still very much on edge having witnessed what had happened in the temple that morning. And they have questions. They have very real questions having been witnesses to what went on.

And there's basically three questions that our friends have and are posing and are causing them confusion and concern. And they want to know the answer. Our first friend's question is a very important one.

And his question is, who is this guy? Who is this guy? Who is this man who does such things? That's the question that is bothering him.

The other friend has another question. And his question is, what makes this man tick? You know, what is important to him? Why does he do these things? Why is it that he behaves in this way?

What makes him tick? And borrowing some slang, I suppose, from across the water, the third friend has another question. And his question is, what ticks him off?

[ 3 : 26 ] He's concerned, for he wants to know why he was so angry. You know, what ticks this man off? Why does he behave in this way? So we have three questions. Who is this guy? Who is this man?

What makes him tick? And what ticks him off? What makes him angry? Why was he so angry this morning in the temple? Well, they're important questions.

And they merit a good answer. So let's try and find answers to these questions in the passage that we've read. The first question that we pose, who is this guy?

Who is this man who did these things in the temple in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago? Before we go to the verses that we've read, and particularly we'll be thinking about verses 45 to 48, but before we do that, we maybe need to take a step back and consider a little more generally the manner in which God reveals himself to us.

In history, God has revealed himself progressively. As history unfolds, God allows his people to learn ever more about him.

[ 4 : 41 ] And so there is a growing cumulative knowledge about God as history progresses. That is the manner in which God has chosen to reveal himself.

Now, we see that clearly in the biblical revelation, where we see that with the coming of Jesus, the incarnation of God, we see a climax in that progressive revelation.

And as Jesus comes on the scene, as Jesus comes to this world, so we are able to know God in a much more fuller way, in a much greater way.

There is a climax in that progression of revelation, of self-revelation. We know that, and we know that for many reasons, that we can think of the words that Jesus said to Philip on one occasion to illustrate that truth.

When he said to Philip, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. And so in these words, we see how we have a climax in the self-revelation of God in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 53 ] And you might say in microcosm, just as history is an unfolding of God's revelation of himself, so in the life of Jesus, in microcosm, we have that same pattern, where Jesus progressively reveals more and more about who he is, about his identity.

We know that on many occasions, the disciples themselves gave evidence of great ignorance concerning who Jesus was.

They didn't have a clear idea of his identity. They too, on one occasion at least, had asked the same question that we are attempting to answer.

Who is this guy? You remember when Jesus ordered the wind and the water to calm down, and the wind and the water obeyed him. This was their question. Who is this man?

They didn't know who he was. And so they posed the question, Who is he? Or remember also the aforementioned Philip, who on the same occasion that we've already mentioned, and Jesus addressed him with these words, Don't you know me, Philip?

[ 7 : 11 ] Even after I have been among you such a long time. And so in the life of Jesus, as I say, in microcosm, you have that same pattern of a progressive revelation of who he is, of his identity.

But as we return to our passage, and as we try and answer the question, Who is this man? From the passage before us. We come to an occasion in the life of Jesus when he is indeed coming to the end of his life.

And so his identity is becoming ever clearer. And Jesus himself gives an answer, or part of the answer certainly, to the question, Who is this man?

In the words that we read in verse 46. There we read these words. Jesus is speaking as he witnesses the scene that is before him. It is written, he said to them, My house will be a house of prayer.

My house will be a house of prayer. And with these words, he declares himself owner of the temple. And he does what only owners have a right to do.

[ 8 : 26 ] You see, only the owner has a right to overturn tables. Only the owner has a right to throw out of a place people he doesn't want to be in that place. Just to illustrate, I am enjoying the hospitality of the Smiths this weekend.

Now imagine if I went into their living room and saw a picture on the wall and said, Oh, I don't like that picture very much. I think I'll take it down. It's a horrible picture. I don't think that, by the way. I can't even remember what the picture is. But the point is, you see, it's not my house. You see, whether I like it or not, really it's neither here nor there. It doesn't belong to me. So I can't change things in a house that doesn't belong to me.

But if I can just, the other side of the coin, I guarantee you folks, that when I get back to my house in Peru, I can guarantee in three weeks, I don't know how much furniture will have moved around.

My wife takes great delight. I don't understand this. I genuinely don't understand the fascination with moving around furniture. But I can guarantee that when I get home, furniture will have been moved.

[ 9 : 34 ] Furniture may have been sold, for I know. But she owns the house. It's her house. And if she wants to move around furniture, well, she can move around furniture. I can tell you about a very painful incident when she moved our bed on one occasion.

And my side of the bed faced against the wall. And in my wife's wisdom, she moved it into the middle of the room. And I woke up in the middle of the night having banged my head on the floor.

Because the new location of the bed hadn't filtered into my navigation system or whatever it is that you have in your brain. But the point is, if she wants to move furniture, she can.

It's her house. You see, Jesus is able to do what He does. However scandalous it might have appeared to those who were witnesses, because it's His house. And that's what He declares.

My house will be a house of prayer. And in my house, these things don't happen. In my house, you don't sell things. In my house, you don't rip people off. In my house, you don't oppress the poor.

[10:33] That doesn't happen in my house. So you can get out of my house. And so as we answer the question, who is this guy? He is the owner of the temple. God's house.

It's His house. And it's actually very revealing and helpful in understanding this progressive self-revelation of Jesus when we consider the words He uses on this occasion and compare these words with the words He uses on the previous occasion at the beginning of His ministry when He had done something very similar and cleansed or purified the temple.

Do you just look with me to John chapter 2 and verse 16? John chapter 2 and verse 16. This is just to locate ourselves.

This is at the beginning of His ministry. And He did something very similar. He cleansed the temple. But there in verse 16 when He is addressing those who He is throwing out of the temple, how does Jesus express Himself?

There in verse 16 we read, To those who sold doves, He said, get these out of here. How dare you turn... And there what does He say? How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?

[11:56] Of course, that was true. That was a true statement of fact. It was a manner in which Jesus was in a measure revealing His identity. How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?

But now as He comes to the end of His life, He uses different language and He says, this is my house. You see the progression in self-revelation concerning who He is.

He not only declares Himself to be the Son of God, He declares Himself to be God. It's my house. God's house is my house. This Jesus, who is the talk of the town in Jerusalem and all the watering holes and back gardens and wherever people gathered in Jerusalem.

This Jesus, this Jesus, who four short days later will be brutally tortured and executed is the eternal Son of God.

He is God. God's house is His house. And He is the one who on another occasion would express Himself in this way. One greater than the temple is here.

[13:01] One greater than the temple is here. And He makes that declaration even this morning. One greater than the temple is here. This Jesus is here this morning.

And He has business to do with us, His people. Who is this guy? My friend, of all of life's big questions, they don't get much bigger than this one discussed by our friends in the pub in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago.

Who is this guy? Who is Jesus? What's your answer to that question? Well, that's the first question we wanted to consider.

But the second question that was being discussed around the table there in Jerusalem by our second friend was what makes Him tick? What makes Him tick? What's important for Jesus? How can we answer that question from the evidence we have in this passage and in this incident? I think the first thing that's very evident if we want to answer the question what makes Him tick?

[14:10] What's important for Jesus? We'd have to say the first thing we find, and it is so evident, is the Word of God. The Word of God is important to Jesus. As He witnesses the scene before Him, His first words, then in verse 46, it is written.

What determines what is right and what is wrong for Jesus? What determines whether He is happy with what He sees or unhappy with what He sees? What are the criteria that determine the conclusions that He comes to?

Are they His own personal preferences that He simply doesn't like what's going on or He does like what's going on? Is He determined or governed by the majority view?

Well, most people seem to be happy with what's happening. Most people don't seem to be objecting, so what's the problem? Is determination or is in conclusion a function of what's always been done?

I imagine in the many years that He had had occasion to visit the temple, these things had been going on. Things like this don't just happen from one day to the next.

[ 15 : 18 ] It was what was always done or had always been done for many, many years. But these are not the factors that determine Jesus' opinion about what is going on.

What determines His opinion are these three words. It is written. It is written. The Word of God had something to say about what was going on in the temple that morning.

And so Jesus quotes Old Testament Scriptures. He quotes from the prophet Isaiah any quotes from the prophet Jeremiah and we won't delve into the source of these quotes or go more deeper other than simply mentioning this fact.

And as this was important for Jesus, as this was what determined His thinking and His opinions about what should go on in church, so that should be true for us.

Indeed, it should be true for everything in life for the Christian. The Bible is, as we are accustomed to describe it, our supreme rule for faith and conduct.

[ 16 : 25 ] And as the Christian church in Scotland hurtles headlong into oblivion, the debate rages. How do we do church in post-modern, post-Christian Scotland?

How do you reach a city with the lowest church attendance in Scotland? What do we have to change? What is it legitimate to change?

All answers in a postcard and you can send them in. But, every answer that you have has to be again, with these words, it is written.

No doubt there are changes that we need to make. No doubt there are things that need to be left behind and things that need to be done and introduced in new ways of doing church. But, everything that we will do, everything that we must do, must be based on these words.

It is written. What makes Jesus tick? Well, the Word of God. The Word of God is what determines the way He thinks and the way He acts and everything He does.

[ 17 : 38 ] But also, as we consider that second question, what makes Jesus tick? We can also say that the worship of God. What was the temple? Well, the temple was, first and foremost, a place of worship.

A place of public worship. The appointed place for God's people to gather and worship Him. And that's where Jesus wanted to be. The place of prayer to the Father.

Of singing praise to God. Of teaching and preaching concerning God and His will. A place of worship. And as Christians, we have been called, above all else, to worship God.

We have been set apart. You have been set apart for that great task of worshiping God. And God has appointed times and places where we can do that together as a congregation of God's people. And that was important to Jesus. And it ought to be important for us as well. What makes Jesus tick? The Word of God. The worship of God.

[ 18 : 41 ] The people of God. He came to the temple to teach the people. It's interesting. We read that following the cleansing of the temple there in verse 47, we read, every day He was teaching at the temple.

This is the final week of His life. These are the final days before He is killed. And yet we read, every day He was teaching at the temple. Didn't He have better things to do?

No. He obviously felt He didn't have better things to do. There was nothing more important for Him to do. And so there He was. He was there on Sunday and on Monday and on Tuesday and then we don't really know how many more days.

But He was there the way it's described by Lucas, every day He was teaching at the temple. The temple was a permanent hive of activity where the people of God were taught the things of God. That's what made Jesus tick. There are some of the things that made Jesus tick and that were important to Him that we find limiting ourselves to this passage. But there's a third question that I want to consider this morning.

[ 19 : 45 ] Not only who is this guy, the question that one of our friends was posing, not only what makes him tick, but thirdly, what ticks him off? What angers at Jesus?

The overwhelming impression left by the incident is the anger, and we might even say violence, of Jesus in cleansing the temple. But this was not, I believe, an outburst of anger.

I think what it was was a thought-out execution of a plan determined by Jesus the previous day. If we read in March, Gospel chapter 11 and verse 11, what do we find?

I think we find significant and revealing words. Mark chapter 11 and verse 11. And without getting into all the chronology, just trust me that this is the previous day.

Mark chapter 11 and verse 11, we read, Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. And then what does it say? It says, He looked around at everything.

[ 20 : 54 ] He goes to the temple and He looks around at everything. He sees what's going on. He sees the money changing and the selling and the buying.

He looks at everything. And it registers and He goes back to Metheny and He thinks, what will I do tomorrow? And He says, tomorrow, I will go and I will cleanse the temple.

Yes, He is angry, but it's not an outburst of irrational anger. It is thought-out anger. It is anger that is based on real events and real facts that He has processed and come to conclusion.

But why was He so angry? What explains is righteous indignation. Now, before I thought a little bit more deeply about this incident, I'd always thought or just assumed that the issue at stake here was one of, we might say, sacrilege.

Unholy things going on in a holy place. This is a holy place. This is a temple. You don't buy and sell things in temples. And I understood that really that's the issue at heart.

[ 22 : 10 ] And I have to say, if I had a pound or a dollar or whatever currency you wish, for every time I have been reprimanded for using, and in Peru we talk about churches, el templo.

We use that word. If I had a pound for every time I've been reprimanded for using el templo, for what were deemed to be unholy purposes, I would be, if not a rich man, at least a lot less poor than I am.

You see, there is this idea and what do the objectors to some of the activities use as their foundation? Oh, but look what it says in the Bible. Jesus said, my house is a house of prayer and you can't do these things in church.

And that is the way in which those who object will object. That has been my experience. But you know, that really is missing the point. It's certainly missing the point about this passage.

Whether there are other arguments that can be rallied for that point of view, that's another issue.

But it's missing the point as far as this passage is concerned. Two things, I believe, deeply anger Jesus and explain His reaction.

[ 23 : 17 ] One is to do with what is happening and the second is to do with where it's happening. Just briefly. Firstly, what is happening? Mark 11, verse 15 gives us what we might say a bigger picture of what was going on.

Mark 11, 15. We read, 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.

Somebody gives us more information about what is going on. Buying and selling of animals declared ceremonially clean for sacrifice.

And it was a total racket. It was a total ripple. Everybody was on the tape. And the winners were the wretch and the losers were the poor. The poor who couldn't bring even a simple pigeon of their own for fear that it would be declared ceremonially unclean and they'd have to buy one in the temple anyway.

And it was a total racket. It was a ripple. The money changers that are mentioned were there for the benefit in adverted commas of pilgrims from other lands who had to change their currency for currency that could be used to pay the temple tax.

[ 24 : 37 ] And you can be sure that the unsuspecting and the uneducated were royally ripped off. And why was this being done? Well, it was being done because these people worshipped money.

The most important thing for them was to make lots and lots of money. And this was a way of making lots and lots of money. And the oppression of the poor because that's what's going on here profoundly angers Jesus when He sees the poor being ripped off.

When He sees the poor being oppressed by these men. He is very angry. And the use of religion for economic gain will fill them particularly with righteous indignation.

And so, a very telling question for us today today. And for our time would be what angers Jesus today. Is Jesus angered by sweatshops that we're told even in Britain are arising with Eastern European workers and illegal workers?

Does that anger Jesus? What do you think? Does the fact that international trade structures often keep many people in grinding poverty while others are able to bask in great wealth?

[ 25 : 52 ] What does Jesus think about that? Does that make Jesus angry? See, social justice was and is on Jesus' agenda and it should be on ours also.

And we have to think very carefully about what that means and what that involves. But it is not something we can simply leave aside as something that's at the margins of our faith and of what it means to be a Christian.

That's what was happening. But the second element that I think angers Jesus has to do with where it's happening. We're told in verse 45 that He entered the temple area.

Now, the temple area refers to the outer court of the Gentiles. And I think here lies the key to the anger of Jesus. Who were principally affected by this marketplace in the temple?

Well, it was the Gentiles. The foreigners. You see, when a Gentile concluded maybe a long pilgrimage because he wanted to go to the temple and he wanted to pray to God and he wanted to worship God, he had come to believe in the living and true God and so he comes to Jerusalem to worship this God.

[ 27 : 08 ] And what does he find in the place appointed for him? He finds smell and noise and business and oppression and racketeering. That's what he finds.

And what is the message that the church in Jerusalem, if we can describe it in that way, what was the message that the people of God in Jerusalem were giving to the Gentiles? It was, you are not welcome here.

This is not a place for you. You are not welcome in this temple unless you want to empty your pockets and fill our pockets. And this is what angers Jesus.

Jesus, when he sees the Gentiles being marginalized and being kicked out of the temple, this Jesus could not stomach. If we turn again to Mark in chapter 11 and verse 17, we find the manner in which or a fuller version of what Jesus actually said there in Mark chapter 11 and verse 17.

As he taught them, at the same time, the same incident, as he taught them, he said, is it not written, my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?

[ 28 : 20 ] You see, why does he make mention of this truth? Because this is precisely what wasn't happening in the temple. The Gentiles were being excluded. They were being marginalized. They had no place.

They weren't welcome. This was for Jews only. We don't want Gentiles lowering the tone of the neighborhood. We don't want them to come here.

And if God has determined that there should be a court of Gentiles, well, so be it, but we'll use it for other purposes. And Jesus says, no, my house is to be a house of prayer for all nations.

Jesus came for all nations. And he hates racism and he hates prejudice based on color of your skin or your ethnic backpans. He hates that.

And it makes him angry. And as we consider that, just for a moment, is this, are these words of Jesus, my house shall be a house of prayer for all nations.

[ 29 : 24 ] Is that not a glorious and a challenging description of the temple and indeed of every Christian church, including this congregation, a house of prayer for all nations.

A house of prayer for all nations. You almost feel there should be a big banner outside that says this is a house of prayer for all nations. All are welcome here.

It doesn't matter what language you speak or where you come from or how much money you have in your pocket. This is your house. This is your place. You are welcome here.

You belong here. Aberdeen is an international city. There is a mission field on your doorstep. And what messages do we give to those who might come?

Do they come and say this is a place where I am welcome, where I can belong? Or is this maybe a great church for free church folks, but not a house of prayer for all nations?

[ 30 : 30 ] What needs to be done to make this place, that glorious place, a house of prayer for all nations? I congratulate and I think it's a very good initiative that next Sunday there's going to be a Gaelic service.

That's great. Go ahead with a Gaelic service. But how about a Polish service? Ah, but we don't speak Polish. Well, you can start learning. Lots of clever people here.

Well, I don't think it would be beyond many of you. Or maybe it's another language. I don't know. But this place should be a place, should be a house of prayer for all nations.

What a wonderful experience it would be. What a marvelous experience worship would be. And it is, certainly, but how enriching as we gather in this place, men and women, boys and girls from all nations to worship the living and true God.

That would be the talk of the town, as much as Jesus clearing the temple was the talk of the town 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem. And so, as we conclude, some challenging questions emerge for us. [ 31 : 45 ] Is Jesus angry with us? See, Jesus hasn't changed. Jesus still gets angry. Is he angry with us? Or maybe another question. Do we get angry together with him?

Do the things that make him angry make us angry? But then as we conclude, and I think I've said that three times, so that's my prerogative as a preacher, as we conclude, what does Jesus do? He doesn't just get angry. What does he do? He throws them out. This is a huge area. I don't know, something like eight foot ball pitches were covered by the court of the Gentiles.

And Mark tells us that he clears it all out. They're all thrown out, including our three friends discussing the events in the pub in Jerusalem.

You see, one thing is to get angry, and another thing is to do something about it. And that's what we have to do. We have to do something about it. When something is wrong, when something needs to be changed, when something isn't pleasing to God, then we have to do something about it.

[ 32 : 57 ] And as Christians, we are the temple of God. And so we have to start cleaning out our temple. We have to repent of prejudice, and of racism, and of unthinking consumerism, and materialism, and the worship of money.

We have to repent of these things. We have to examine the church that we belong to, and be prepared to do whatever it takes to make this place a house of prayer for all nations.

Because that is what it ought to be. That is God's purpose for this place. A house of prayer for all nations that God would enable us and help us to consider what we need to repent of, what we need to get angry with, what we need to do in response to His Word, in response to the it is written that we have considered this morning.

Let us pray. Lord, we come before You this morning and we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that it is indeed an authoritative Word.

We thank You that it is true. And we thank You that it is relevant for us today where we are. And we thank You for this wonderful vision that You placed before us, that the church that we are part of might be a house of prayer for all nations.

[ 34 : 18 ] We thank You for the measure and that it is so for those who do gather with us from other lands. But Lord, we pray that that would be a true and far greater measure.

That there would be those from every land and nation and tribe and language and background who find a home in this place.

That this would be the place where they gather to worship the living and true God. God. Oh Lord, we pray that You would help us to know what it is to get angry.

That we would know what it is to experience in our own lives righteous indignation. First of all, beginning with our own sin. But also as we look around us, the church that we belong to and indeed the nation we are part of.

But not only, Lord, would we get angry, but that we would be directed by You as to what we have to do in response. So we need Your help. We are, as we have sung, simple minds.

[ 35 : 19 ] And we need You to direct us. We need Your life and Your direction. Help us to hear Your voice and to know what to do. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.