**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 4-10-2022 – Jesus Flips the Script**

About a week ago I suspect that some of us were watching the final four in college basketball. Just curious if any of you were watching that?

For me, over the years, this has been something that I enjoy watching. It is exciting following around on this big tournament and seeing some of the games and upsets that take place along the way, like the Cinderella run of St. Peter’s had this year – a school that I didn’t even know existed before this tournament.

But it is also fun to see the great programs that seem to be competing for championship year after year.

 One of those top programs is Duke University. I remember as a child watching Duke and they were actually my favorite team for a while. Duke has been coached by a man named Mike Krzyzewski since 1980. Coach K, as he is known, was to retire after this season.

As Duke has another great season and progressed through the tournament to the final four, it seemed like the script was for Coach K to go winning a national championship for his 6th time.

But that was not to be. North Carolina, Duke’s longtime rival, upset Duke in the semifinals and Duke’s season came to a close.

Sometimes scripts are flipped. Sometimes what we think is going to happen does not actually happen. And this can be a good thing or a bad thing.

We could probably come up with several examples from our lives when the “script” we expect is flipped.

A relationship that is rocky and difficult is surprisingly turned around and restored. Or conversely, a healthy relationship takes a turn for the worse.

A job that starts off as a chore becomes a joy. Or rewarding work becomes a frustration.

A team does better or worse than expected. Someone is healed, made whole, restored when it seemed nearly impossible or someone suddenly becomes ill.

Someone is going down the wrong path and then they encounter Christ and find life or someone in the church falls away from the faith or has a moral failure.

 Sometimes scripts are flipped. And the reality, friends, is that God sometimes flips the scripts of human expectations as well. People didn’t expect the Messiah to be born in a dirty manger or to grow up in the insignificant town of Nazareth --- but that was God’s plan.

People expected the Messiah to overthrow the oppressive Romans through military might, but He didn’t.

And today, on Palm Sunday, as we remember Jesus coming into Jerusalem as the King of Israel, the events that would follow would be very surprising to many people, including His own disciples.

Today, as we continue to focus on the hands of Jesus, we will find our Lord most definitely flipping the script of what people were expecting of Him.

Our passage picks up immediately where our first Scripture today left off, in Matthew
21:12-17:

**12Jesus 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. 13“It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3A12-17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23840a)**] but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3A12-17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23840b)**]”**

**14The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. 15But 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.**

**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, Lord, have called forth your praise’[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3A12-17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23843c)**]?”**

**17And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.**

Sometimes people have referred to our Lord as “**gentle Jesus, meek and mild**.” This is probably not the passage that they were thinking of what they came up with this saying.

The truth is that Jesus was meek. He was gentle and self-controlled. He was slow to anger, just like His Father in Heaven.

But Jesus did get angry. And Jesus did use very strong words at times.

Why? Because Jesus is passionate for people. He is zealous for humanity. He is not indifferent. He wants none to parish.

And when do we find Jesus most likely to become angry? It is when Jesus is dealing with hypocrisy. It is when people try to look spiritually impressive to others, but their hearts are far from God.

In our passage today, Jesus flips the man-made script of expectations for Him by literally flipping over tables. Remember, people were just proclaiming Him as the King of Israel. Many people wanted Jesus to take His seat as Israel’s King in Jerusalem and then get to work in overthrowing the Romans.

But instead, Jesus’ anger is directed towards some of the people of Israel.

Let’s look at this scene again. Matthew tells us that Jesus was entering the Temple courts. Only a select few people were allowed into the inner parts of the Temple; for many, the Temple courts were as close as they could get. Within the Temple grounds, there was the court of the Gentiles. This was the closest that non-Jewish people court get to the Temple. And then, there was the court of the women (which was the closest that Jewish women could get to the heart of the Temple. And closer still was the court of Israel (and only the priests could go beyond this point).

Jesus was likely in the court of the Gentiles, going by additional details that Mark includes in his gospel. But here, instead of this area in the Temple grounds being a sacred space that Jews and Gentiles alike could come and pray and worship, this place had become a marketplace.

They had filled up the grounds with stands to do business, particularly business related to the Temple. People would bring their money and get animals or other items to then offer as sacrifices to the Lord.

So, what was wrong with that? It was that they should have been doing this outside the temple groups, not in the court of the Gentiles.

The Temple of God was meant to be a holy and sacred place. The Temple was meant to be a house of prayer. The focus of the Temple was to be on God and for being a place that all people could come to strengthen their walk with God.

Instead, the court of the Gentiles was filled with buying and selling. This could and should have been done outside the temple grounds. Israel was meant to be a light to the nations and Jesus could see the hypocrisy. People were turning God’s house into a den for robbers. Strong words. While there could be unjust transactions taking place, they were certainly robbing sacred space away for worshipers, especially non-Jewish worshipers.

And Jesus is very upset by this and in this zealous love he flips the script – He literally turns the tables on the moneychangers. He cleans the Temple.

And this leads to another surprising truth about Jesus on the week of His passion.

We are told in the Bible that Jesus is not only the King, but He is also a High Priest. The High priest of Israel was the one who would offer the sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. The Book of Hebrews goes into great detail speaking about this.

But interestingly, each year before the Day of Atonement, the High Priest of Israel was paraded into the city a week before they offer the sacrifice. Then, the high priest would go into the Temple and go through ritual purification in order to make sure that they were clean and pure before they offer the sacrifice.

Jesus, however, after He is paraded into Jerusalem, He also goes to the Temple. But instead of being cleansed at the Temple, what does Jesus do? He cleanses the Temple.

In fact, there are more parallels. In the night before the sacrifice the high priest would pull an all-nighter and stay awake. This was to try to avoid sinning in their sleep with an impure dream. The attendants of the high priest would keep him awake to try to keep him from falling into temptation.

With Jesus, on the night before His sacrifice, He pulls an all-nighter, but He is trying to keep Peter, James and John awake, lest they fall into temptation.

It’s just profound.

In any case, Jesus not only cleanses the temple, but Matthew writes that He heals people as well. Jesus, in all that He is doing, is helping people to encounter God in a deeper and more intimate way.

And the children that are there begin to praise Jesus, as the crowds did when Jesus came into town.

But the religious leaders were indignant as Jesus is receiving praise from these children.

Jesus flips the script once again as He commends the praise of children over the self-righteousness of the Pharisees.

So friends, what are we to make of this story for our lives today, as we reflect on the hands of Jesus being used to overturn the tables at the temple?

I think that it is simply this. Jesus wants His people to be focused on blessing others, particularly those that could be considered outsiders.

The Jewish people were showing no concern for the gentiles in that they took that space to use as a marketplace. They were focused only on themselves. They didn’t care about the gentiles – the non-Jews.

Jesus wants His Church to truly be a light on a hill, sharing His love. This is our vision statement as Chestnut Grove Church.

We live this out by seeking to be intentional in making ways for others that may feel far away from God to find access to God.

It is easy for any church to become focused inwardly. Certainly, we are to love one another and pray for one another and encourage one another. That’s important. That’s biblical.

But we are also called to be actively reaching out to others in the Name of Jesus as well. There are Christians that are unconnected to a church family. What can we do to intentionally reach out to them? There are many people that do not know Christ today. How can we focus our energy on helping them to better connect to the Lord?

And finally, please remember that the church is the Temple of God today. You and I, we carry the presence of the Lord with us as well.

In other words, it is not so much about helping people become connected to the church building, but it is through becoming connections ourselves to them.

The heart of Jesus is always for others to know Him. So here are some action steps for you to consider.

\*Invite someone to come to church or to the Westward Road concert later this month. This is Holy Week. It is a great time to invite someone.

\*Invite someone to the Thursday Bible Study or to the monthly book club here at Chestnut Grove.

\*Invite someone to join you for a meal or simply build relationships with people.

\*Make a 10 most wanted list and pray for those individuals to find Christ or to become more intentional in their walk with Christ.

\*With the Heavenly Hands daycare here --- write encouraging notes to the staff or the families of the children.

\*Find out some of the needs around you and seek to help in some way.

Feel free to be creative.

These are just some ideas, but there would be many other ways that we are outwardly focused on blessing others.

The bottom-line friends, is that God’s heart is always reaching out to others. It is externally focused. And may it be so with us as well.

The worldly script is to be inwardly-focused, but let us be like Jesus and seek to be intentional in passionately making a place for others to encounter and know our great God.

Let’s pray…

Resources: www.BibleGateway.com ; The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with The New International Version: Matthew Chapters 13 Through 28 by D.A. Carson ; The Gospel According to Matthew by Leon Morris