

House of Prayer [Or Den of Thieves]

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a man of prayer and touching God's heart, and it highlights the significance of the temple as a house of prayer and a place of righteousness and justice.

Duration: 47:08

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-23, Matthew 6:33, Mark 11:15-17, James 4:4, James 4:8

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the danger of pursuing material gain with religious motives. He shares the story of a friend who lost his love for God by getting caught up in the pursuit of wealth. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a heart's desire to touch the heart of God through prayer. He warns against being consumed by the worries and concerns of this world, and reminds the audience that they cannot serve both God and money. The sermon encourages believers to trust in God's provision and to prioritize seeking the kingdom of God above all else.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other pieces are available by writing World Challenge, Post Box 260, Lindale, Texas 75771 or by calling 903-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Hallelujah. It's been my heart's desire for several years now to touch the heart of God.

And I believe that's got to be the heart's desire of everyone who's called by the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to want to touch his heart like David touched his heart. It's my heart's desire to be known in heaven as a man of prayer. It doesn't really matter what people think here on this earth.

I could point to the clock and talk about, as others have in the past perhaps, and I could talk about the number of hours that I've spent before the Lord, but that doesn't make me a man of prayer at all. I can pray for hours and days on end and never, ever touch the heart of God. It's absolutely nothing to do with the length of our prayers.

It's the intensity. It's a life that is gripped by the Spirit of God, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, that God can pour his heart through, and in turn, our prayers are lifted up and we begin to touch the heart of

God. I think there's nothing more important in my whole life right now than this.

It's a quest. It's something I ask the Lord not to give me rest until, like Moses did, I can cease from any religious activity in my life. And it's very possible to get a lot of religious activity in our lives and we don't really realize it's such.

And we turn aside and we face that burning bush and meet God face to face where he begins to reveal his heart to us. And we come out of that place a new person, a new man. I cherish the presence of Jesus, not only for my life but for your lives, as the people of God.

Nothing more precious to Jesus than we should touch his heart in this last hour of time. It's like that special son or daughter or grandchild, for those of you that are older, that comes into your house and sits on your knee and it just seems no matter how tough and crusty you try to make yourself on the exterior, there's absolutely nothing that you would withhold. That grandchild knows it, you know it.

That son and daughter knows it, you know it. And even if you say no, it's only with a grin and they know they can leave your knee and know that they have the thing that they asked for. It's my heart's desire to touch God like that.

I could stop this message right here, right now, and we could begin to pray. Oh God, would you let us touch your heart. There's something so special when you begin to touch him, when you begin to know him.

It's like everything else pales in comparison. It doesn't matter whether you're known or not. It doesn't matter.

Nothing seems to matter anymore but to know him and to touch his heart, to share his heart, to feel his heart. I'm going to bring a message tonight that is going to require some searching of the Holy Ghost to touch our lives. How many here tonight can honestly say that, you can honestly say, I want to be a man or woman of prayer.

I want to touch the heart of God. Just raise your hand up. Father, you see every hand.

You see the hearts. You know tonight, Lord, those who want to touch you, oh God, who want to be known in heaven as men and women of prayer. It doesn't matter what people say on the earth.

For a million people could give us all kinds of praise but Lord God, if we're not touching your heart, if you don't know us as people of prayer, then everything we do on this earth is in vain. Lord, I ask for a sovereign anointing of the Holy Spirit tonight. Sovereign touch of your Spirit upon my life and upon the people that are gathered in this house to hear this message.

I acknowledge before heaven tonight, Father, that without your Spirit I'm nothing. Without the anointing of your Holy Spirit, it's just words. It won't do any good.

It won't convict. I'll be preaching to the intellect and to the will. But God, you want to minister heart to heart to your church in this last hour of time.

And so, Lord, I'm asking that I might be able to bring your heart to the people tonight. That I might speak on your behalf. That you could have pre-course to my life and speak and pour it through my life and minister grace and strength and a blessing, oh God, to this people that you desire to draw so close to

yourself that you might manifest your glory in your bride in this last moment of time that we're living in.

Jesus, it's not a time for religious games. And Lord, I don't approach you tonight wanting to play any games, oh God. I desire your heart with all of my heart, with everything that's within me, oh God.

I desire your heart. And I know the people here, there are many, many who desire your heart. Now, God, reveal to us tonight things that may stand in the way.

Reveal to us by the Holy Spirit, oh God, issues, Lord, of the heart that stop us from coming before you, that hinder our prayers, oh God. We know tonight that we're not heard by our much speaking. We know that we're not heard because of the volume or the length of our prayers or the meticulous English.

We know that it's a heart that you're looking for and it's a heart that you listen to, oh God. Oh Jesus, Jesus, it is written that your house shall be called a house of prayer. Oh God, when you touch us tonight, Lord, let there be an eternal transaction in this service tonight.

I ask, oh God, that not only for my life but the lives of everyone here in this house tonight there would be a change, there would be an absolute transformation, that people would leave here changed, their prayer life would never be the same again. God, in spite of what I'm about to speak, Lord, if you need to go deeper, go deeper by the power of the Holy Ghost. I invite you, Holy Spirit, to exalt Christ.

I invite you to lift up Jesus Christ in the inward man and heart of all who have come to hear tonight. Jesus, be lifted up, be magnified. Nothing else matters anymore.

Be lifted up. Be heard in the inward man. Be received in the hearts of your people, oh God.

Hallelujah. I bind every hindering spirit, every power of hell and darkness that comes against the house of the Lord, that comes against God's heritage, His people. Satan, I rebuke you in the name of the Lord and I rebuke every power of darkness that you send against the anointed, the cherished of Almighty God through Jesus Christ.

We loose an anointing of the Holy Ghost to open prison doors, to let deaf and ears hear, to let bruised hearts receive the healing oil of Christ. Oh God, you're speaking to us tonight, Lord. Give us ears to hear and hearts to respond.

We ask this in the precious and holy name of Jesus. Amen. Mark chapter 11, please.

I'm going to entitle this message A House of Prayer or a Den of Thieves. A House of Prayer or a Den of Thieves. It's going to take courage tonight to let the Holy Ghost look, but God speaks to us for our good and not for our hurt.

He wants our hearts. Oh, it's so precious. It's so precious.

Lately I find myself being drawn of the Lord, be tired at night and want to go to bed. Sometimes I win. Sometimes God wins.

But those nights that I have the courage to get back out again and go downstairs where it's quiet and dark and I just find His heart is waiting there for me. I don't know how else to explain it. I haven't got the words really to tell you.

It's so precious. I begin to touch His heart. Nothing matters anymore.

Mark chapter 11, verse 15 to 17. And they come to Jerusalem and Jesus went into the temple and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple. And overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of them that sold doves.

And He would not suffer or allow that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But you have made it a den of thieves. It is written, Jesus said, My house shall be called the house of prayer.

Now here's Jesus, the Son of God, that Almighty God Himself in the flesh, coming into His temple, coming into the place that was set aside to glorify Him, was a place that was set aside for prayer, set aside for anxious and hungry and thirsting souls to come in and seek the throne of God, a place where the mercy of the Lord could be revealed, where the kingdom of God could go forward, where souls in captivity could be released and innumerable victories could be won through simple faith and obedience in a loving Heavenly Father that wants nothing more than to give the kingdom unto His children. This temple that Jesus came in had one time been a house of prayer. And I suppose the religious activity was still going on, incredible religious activity.

If you and I could be transported back there tonight, we would see people, perhaps by the thousands, coming in and out on a daily basis, bringing their sacrifices before the Lord, sacrificing, praying, praising. You know, sometimes religious activity can look very good in the sight of man until the Son of God comes on the scene. In His eyes, the Apostle John said, are like a flame of fire.

He doesn't see like men see. He sees through all the religious facades. He sees through all the things that men establish and call themselves by the name of God.

And He sees something that nobody else perhaps is seeing, or if anybody is, there are very, very few in that generation that are seeing what the Son of God sees. He says, it's written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. Now, go back in the Old Testament to the book of 2 Chronicles.

I want to look at the origins of the temple of God. 2 Chronicles chapter 6. Solomon built the temple of the Lord. It was in David's heart to build a temple, a house for God.

But God wouldn't allow David to build that house because David had been a man of war and a lot of blood had been shed through his life and by his hand. And He said to David, Your son Solomon is going to build a temple for Me, a dwelling place for Me. And so the Scripture says that David, by the Spirit, gave unto Solomon the pattern of the house that was to be built for God, the pattern of the inner courts, the outer courts, the mercy seat.

The whole thing was given to Solomon, even though he was young and tender of years, by the Spirit of the Lord. And Solomon went in and built a temple, a beautiful temple for God, the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. And in 2 Chronicles chapter 6, verse 12, we see now we're in the process of the dedication of the temple, which began a little earlier.

But we see Solomon now, before all of the people that are gathered in that temple, in verse 12, an incredible scene. And it says, And he stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel and spread forth his hands. So we see Solomon now about to pray in this temple

that has been fashioned by God.

It's been fashioned for God, for the purposes of God. And it's a dwelling place for God Himself. For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold of five cubits long and five cubits broad and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court.

And upon it he stood and kneeled down on his knees before all the congregation of Israel and spread forth his hands towards heaven. Here's Solomon, having completed the house of the Lord now. They're dedicating the house of God.

This house has been built by the plan and pattern of Almighty God Himself. And now Solomon stretches out his hands to pray towards heaven. In verse 19, I'm going to just show you some aspects of the prayer of Solomon.

He says, Lord, have regard to the prayer of Your people in this house. Verse 19, he says, Have respect therefore to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which Thy servant prayeth before Thee. In other words, give regard to my prayer that Thine eyes may be opened upon this house day and night upon the place whereof Thou hast said Thou hast put Thy name there to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant prayeth towards this place.

And so Solomon is saying, Hearken therefore, verse 21, unto the supplications of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel which they shall make towards this place. Hear Thou from Thy dwelling place, even from heaven, and when you hear, forgive. And so Solomon is saying, Lord, You've established this house and I'm asking You when I begin to pray, it's been built according to Your pattern, it's fashioned by Your design, I've done it all in obedience to You.

And now Lord, I'm asking that You would hear our prayer, You would regard it, that Your eyes would be opened, that Your ears would give attention to the prayers that are going to be made in this place. Not only my prayers, but the prayers of Your servants, Your people Israel. We see some other aspects of his prayer in verse 22, 23.

We see a cry for righteousness come out of the heart of Solomon. He says, If a man sins against his neighbor and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath comes before Thine altar in this house, then hear from heaven and do and judge your servants by requiting the wicked and by recompensing his way upon his own head and by justifying the righteous and giving him according to his righteousness. And so Solomon is crying out to God.

You can see this grand spectacle that's happening in the house of the Lord, the temple of God. Solomon's on the scaffold, his hands raised and he says, Lord, let this be a place of righteousness. A place that when people pray, O God, that You will let the evil of the wicked come upon his own head and that You will let the righteousness of the righteous man shine forth and You will declare him to be righteous.

O God, in other words, when we pray You will answer the things that we bring before You. You see in verse 24, Solomon prays a plea for victory over the enemies of God's people. He says, And if Thy people Israel be put to the worst before the enemy because they have sinned against Thee and shall return and confess Thy name and pray and make supplication before Thee in this house, then hear from heaven forgive the sin of Your people Israel and bring them again unto the land which You gave them unto their fathers.

In verse 26, he puts out a plea for the nation. He says, When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against Thee, yet if they pray towards this place and confess Thy name and turn from their sin when Thou dost afflict them, then hear from heaven, forgive the sin of Your servants, verse 27, of the people Israel and when Thou has taught them the good way wherein they should walk and send rain upon the land which Thou has given to Thy people for an inheritance. Verse 28, Solomon prays for a plea for deliverance from affliction.

He says, If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting or mildew, locusts or caterpillars, if the enemies besiege them in the cities of their land, whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness there be, verse 29, then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man or of all Thy people Israel when everyone shall know his own sore and his own grief and shall spread forth his hands in this house, then hear from heaven Thy dwelling place and forgive and render to every man according to all his ways whose heart Thou knowest. You see that Solomon is saying, O God, when people come in to Your presence and everyone knows the condition of his own heart, everyone knows his own grief and his own sore, when they come in humility before You and are willing to acknowledge their state, will You hear from them O God and will You answer prayer in this place, in this house that's been built and designed by Your hand. Verse 32, Solomon prays for his neighbors and for the stranger.

He says, Moreover concerning the stranger which is not from Thy people Israel but has come from a far country for Thy great namesake and Thy mighty hand and Thy stretched out arm, if they come and pray in this house, hear from heaven from Thy dwelling place and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for. Verse 36, he asks for mercy for God's people when they sin, if they sin against Thee, for there is no man that sinneth not and Thou be angry with them and deliver them over before their enemies and they carry them captive into a land far off or near. Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whether they are carried captive and turn and pray unto Thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, we have dealt wickedly, then if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whether they have carried them captives and pray towards this land, which Thou gavest unto their fathers and towards this city.

Verse 39, then hear Thou from the heavens even from Thy dwelling place their prayer and their supplication. And now, verse 40 says, Now my God, let I beseech Thee, Thine eyes be open and let Thine ears be attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. Hallelujah.

I pray with all my heart that that's your heart tonight to say, Oh God, I am allowing Your hand to come upon my life. I am allowing the touch of Your Spirit to mold me and fashion me the way that You desire me to be built. I am allowing the nature and character of Christ to be formed in my life.

So that, Oh God, when I pray, I know that Your ears will be open and Your eyes will be looking down upon me when I pray. And that my prayer will not be just some endless rhetoric touching hollow walls in an empty house. But God, Your presence will be here in my life.

And knowing that, Lord, You will hear my prayer and You will respond and You will not turn away Your face from Your anointed. And now, we'll see God's response to when His house is built according to His instructions and when the prayer is honest. One thing I sense about Solomon when he's before God and the people, it's an honest prayer that Solomon is praying.

It's a heart-wrenching cry that Solomon's putting up before God. Solomon at this point in his life is hungry for the things of God. He's hungry for the righteousness of God to be found in his house.

He's hungry for the righteousness of God to be found in his people. He's hungry for the stranger even who's coming in to see the righteousness of God imparted and have to turn and say that the God of Israel, He is God. Now it says in chapter 7 when Solomon had made an end of praying that fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the Lord saying, For He is good and for His mercy endureth forever. Did you know that's God's desire for your life and for mine? That when we pray that He might be able to send the fire of His Holy Spirit into our lives anew and afresh and let His heart be revealed within our lives.

That we could stand like the Apostle Paul and say, It's no longer I who lives, it's Christ who lives in me. That the things that we do we're not motivated by our own desires anymore. We're motivated by the very heart of God.

We're not living for ourselves anymore. We're living for the glory and the purposes of God within our life. That there would be such a manifested glory of Christ upon His church and upon His bride that the stranger coming into our midst would have to stand and say and acknowledge the Lord is God, the Lord is God and His mercy endureth forever.

What a beautiful type and shadow of the church. That's exactly what this house was. It's a type and shadow of you and I who have now become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of Almighty God.

It was fashioned by the hand of God, built by the instructions of God right down to the last little detail. And when it was completed and finished that's when the prayer began to go up. That's when the fire of God came down.

The people couldn't even stand to minister in the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled this house. And it's God's desire in this generation to have His glory through His manifested Son, Jesus Christ, fill you and I, fill our earthen bodies, fill this earthen temple with the presence of Jesus to the point where we'll be consumed with a passion for Him. That's what touching His heart is really all about.

But in Mark chapter 11 now, Jesus comes into this house. What a sad indictment. Many, many years later Jesus comes into Jerusalem into a house that's built for His name where the same types of things are supposed to be going on.

The religious activity is still going on. People are still bringing in sheep and goats and sacrifices and young turtle doves and they're still coming in and offering their prayers and the high priest is still going in at the appointed times and seasons. And there's all kinds of activity going on in this house but all of a sudden Jesus, the same God, you've got to understand He's the same God that answered by fire in the days of Solomon.

Now the very same God born and walking in the body of a man walks in and it's no longer the fire of anointing that He's bringing into this temple. It's the fire of His wrath when He walks into it. He said, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer by all nations but you have made it a den of thieves.

You know, in this generation that we're living in, the Apostle Paul, no, Peter in Acts chapter 7, he says, The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands as said the prophets. You know, the Most High

doesn't dwell in this house. This is a very, very beautiful church building but when you and I leave, God leaves with us.

It's not like it was in the Old Testament because we have become the ones who have inherited the promises that the prophets in the Old Testament can only ever dream of, that Isaiah only saw far off. We have now been those upon whom the Spirit of the Lord has been poured out. He no longer lives in a building like this.

When we're gone, God is not here. When we're gone, this is just an empty shell. It's just an empty building.

We bring the presence of God in with us because He lives in these earthen vessels. David said, My flesh and my heart fails me but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. In other words, my own natural body would fail me but God is my strength.

He has come into my life and He's my strength. Verse 15 in Mark chapter 11 says, Jesus came to Jerusalem and went into the temple and according to Mark, He found four things which indicated that it had ceased to be a house of prayer. Now folks, listen to me carefully.

You and I have become the temple. You and I are the temple of the Holy Spirit of Almighty God. And the scripture is still true.

It says, It is written, My house, which is you, My house, God would say tonight, is you, it's me, shall be called of all nations a house of prayer. And I'm going to ask this question tonight. Is your house a house of prayer? Have you touched the heart of God? Are you allowing the Spirit of the Lord to pray through your life? If God were to walk in bodily form into the sanctuary tonight and walk down the aisles looking at each one of us, would He be able to look at you right in the eye and say, a house of prayer, a house of prayer, a house of prayer? Because He's not dwelling in the Old Testament temples anymore.

He's dwelling in us. There were four things that Jesus found in this temple which had indicated it had ceased to become, to be a house of prayer. And number one, there was buying and selling going on in the temple.

It says, He cast out them that sold and bought in the temple. The Apostle James says, you adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6, let me just read it to you.

Matthew chapter 6 verse 19, He says these words, Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust does corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of light. If your eye is singly focused, that means on the glory of God, to see the very nature and character of Christ born within your life.

Your whole body then will be full of light. But if your eye is evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.

No man can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon, well actually mammon, or money.

You cannot serve God and mammon. We've got to make a choice in our lives when we come to Christ. We serve Christ with all our heart, soul, mind and strength or we serve money with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

But you cannot serve both. You can't divide your time and affection and attention. He says, Therefore I say unto you, don't take any thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink or put on.

Is not life more than meat in the body, more than clothing? Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap or gather into barns. Yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought or that means by worrying can add one cubit unto his stature or in other words one inch or eighteen inches unto his height? And why do you take thought for clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin.

And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothes the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not more much clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink or with what shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Seek first the Kingdom of God. All kinds of buying and selling were going on in the temple.

And I feel with the grief of God in my heart that so many people have lost touch with God because there's so much buying and selling going on. So much concern with commerce when it comes to when we should be concerned about touching the heart of God. You know, folks, you know, one of the litmus tests, some people would say, I don't love money more than I love God.

Well, it's an easy thing to test in your life. If you spend more time thinking about business than you do thinking about Jesus Christ, then your heart is filled with covetous practices. That's what the Scripture says.

You love money more than God. There's no getting around it. Where your treasure is, there's where your heart is also.

That's what the Scripture says. David said in Psalm 7, If riches increase, set not your heart upon them. The Apostle Paul says, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

Hallelujah! Jesus Christ came to deliver souls from a world of darkness that had become his enemy. And God forbid in my life that I should be found buying and selling in this last hour of time. Not that we don't have to do business.

Don't misunderstand me. We have to do business here in this world. Everybody has a job.

And the Bible says that if a man doesn't look after those who support those of his own household, he's worse than an infidel and has denied the faith. There's a practical aspect to this. But folks, you know when

you've crossed over the line.

And God knows when you've crossed over the line. There were certain things that I'm sure needed to be done in the temple. But they had crossed over a line.

And they had joined affinity or become friends with the world. And there was overt buying and selling. Jesus called it a den of thieves.

Those in that generation may have called it necessary financial transactions. In the house of God. This is the end of side 1. You may now turn the tape over to side 2. You've taken away the place of prayer.

And you're spending all your time with commerce. Hallelujah. The apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy chapter 6. He exhorts the church.

Turn there please. Quickly. 1 Timothy chapter 6. Verse 6. He says.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into this world. And it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment or clothing let us be there with content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. Verse 10.

For the love of money is the root of all evil. Which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But then he says.

But thou, O man of God flee these things and follow after righteousness and godliness and faith and love patience and meekness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life where unto thou art also called and has professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Verse 17. He says charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high minded nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good that they be rich in good works ready to distribute willing to communicate.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life. Hallelujah. When Christ comes into your temple what does he find? Buying and selling? Or does he find somebody who is detached from the world acknowledging that we need to work to live and there's a certain amount of commerce necessary to survive in this world.

But if your heart and this is what happened in that temple the hearts of the people were engrossed with buying and selling and it had ceased to be a place of prayer. You see you can't be engrossed in the things of the world and share the heart of God. That's why a person who is covetous really can't pray.

And when they do pray they're generally praying about themselves and their own needs. Secondly he threw out the money changers. The money changers.

Now money changers are people who change money from one form to another. I mean that's a simple definition. I'm sure there are people coming in from other places and societies and they needed money changed.

I know I needed money changed when I came into the United States of America from Canada. If you want to call it that needless to say I didn't get a whole lot back for what I brought in. These people recognize that the love of money is wrong.

They've come to that place. They understand that the love of money is wrong. And so they indulge in a form of what I would call self-delusion.

They change from the overt desire for money to the pursuit of pleasure or things that bring pleasure. In 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 4 the apostle Paul talks about the last days. He said people are going to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

In verse 5 it says having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof from such turn away. Money changers. He threw them out of the temple.

That's people who sit under preaching like you're hearing tonight and they will acknowledge it's wrong to seek money before the kingdom of God. And they will even repent of this. But they will change their love of money.

They're money changers to an absolute pursuit of pleasure. From chasing after overt cash it now becomes chasing after going to horse races and the big topic is who's got what condominium and where. In what country and how long you spend here and where do you go there.

They don't realize they're living under a delusion. You know what the sign is you're living there? You can't pray. You can't be a money changer and touch the heart of God.

There's got to be a detachment from these things. Even if they increase David said set not your heart upon them. Set not your heart upon them.

It will only be a snare. Be willing to distribute. Be willing to do good works.

Be willing to release what God puts into your hand. But let not your heart be engrossed with this thing. God forbid in this last hour of time that we should be a people seeking pleasure when people are dying all around us when we're living in a decaying society a dying world when we hear like last Sunday afternoon for example the very heart cry of God for our sons and daughters lost out in our city streets.

God forbid that we should be living for pleasure in this hour of time. God forbid if you're living for yourself and living in pleasure you can't possibly share the heart of God. You can't.

And Jesus moves deeper into the temple and he throws out those that sell doves the seats of those that sold doves. Now in the Old Testament it talks about people would come in and have to offer sacrifice for their sins and they very often wouldn't have enough money to have a to bring a lamb or a goat or maybe it's too far to travel and they would come in and they would purchase doves for sacrifice. And so the dove sellers had come into the temple.

Seems like a pretty religious activity. It seems righteous. It's a need.

The people needed doves to sacrifice. I'm not going to get into what they did and why they did it but they were selling doves and that speaks to my heart of people who are in the pursuit of gain with religious motives. And there are so many people that's the next stage after they've found out the love of money is wrong that they've understood the pursuit of pleasure will cut them off from knowing the heart of God then

they move into the next stage is selling doves.

Pursuing gain with religious motives. What it really is is greed that's masked by real or alleged good deeds. Here's some examples and you may have said them yourself or even heard them.

Just think of how much I can tithe if I get that extra job. Although I'll have to work Sunday but God understands. Now here's a real good one.

I've heard this before as a pastor. If I win that lottery I'm going to build a new church. Isn't that a good one? I got an answer for that one.

Thus saith the Lord. Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you're going to build for me? And where is the place of my rest? For all these things is my hand made and those things have been saith the Lord.

But to this man will I look. Even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. There's all kinds of churches and even doctrines now catering to the pursuit of selling doves. Gain with religious motives.

There's organizations that have crept into the body of Christ that have presentations. When I was a young Christian I knew a man one time that had a deep, deep abiding love for Jesus Christ. And he got snared by one of these organizations.

Invited me to his house one night for coffee and started opening up books and started telling me how that if I was all, if I could make money. This organization was going to make money. And in making money it was going to make me happy.

And it was going to fulfill my life. And look at all the good deeds I could do. I could build an orphanage.

And this is part of the presentation. Some of you know what this is all about. You've sat through these things and some of you are snared in it yourself.

I can build an orphanage and I can give to missions and you can do this. And I know a lot of people who got snared in the church that I was in when I was a young Christian by this organization. And I tell you they're not building orphanages today and they're not giving to missions.

They're buying gold chains for themselves and taking trips. That's what was in their heart. And they just messed it all with religious motives.

I saw one of my dearest friends lose his love for God. Getting snared by the pursuit of gain with religious motives. A dove seller in the house of God.

Losing his desire to pray. I meet him today and he can hardly look me in the eye. He's lost his love for God.

Here's another one. When our ship comes in we'll really start giving to missions. When our ship comes in.

Hallelujah. When our ship comes in. That's a good one.

Jesus will say to these people then he will say unto them on the left hand depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire. For I was hungry you gave me no meat. I was thirsty you gave me no drink.

I was a stranger you took me not in. Naked you clothed me not. Sick and in prison and you visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him saying Lord when did we see you hungry or thirst or stranger naked or sick or in prison and did not minister unto you. And he'll answer saying verily I say unto you in so much as you did it not unto the least of these you did it not unto me. Folks if your ship is never going to come in if your rowboat doesn't go out first.

You've got to take what God's put in your hand and start giving it sacrificially to missions now. What makes you think? I've tried to speak to people who live under this delusion that all of a sudden when my ship comes in and I make all this money I'm really going to give to missions. Folks if you're not giving to missions now you're not going to give to missions then.

It's absolute. It's not in your heart. Nothing's going to change.

Nothing's going to change. There'll just be a bigger house to maintain bigger cars to drive and there'll still be nothing for the work of God. And lastly he would not allow or suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

And that's the last stage that people get to before they get free of all the buying and selling that goes on in these earthly temples. Carrying vessels. It's the last stage.

It's like Lot's wife coming out of Sodom and Gomorrah leaving a horrible place and looking back behind her. Can you imagine? God said don't look back at the things you left behind. Don't longingly look back.

And that's what she did. She longingly looked back at the things she was leaving behind and she turned into a pillar of worthless salt. Good for nothing but to be trodden down and cast under the feet of men.

And those are people who are still buying and selling in their mind. Still carrying the worries and concerns of this world. Absolutely not trusting God.

He said He would provide. Folks, let's settle it tonight. He said if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness that God would give us all the things that we need.

Did He not say that? Settle it in your heart. It's either true or it's not true in your mind. There's no halfway in this thing.

And to set out and try to do it yourself you're just creating your own Ishmael. Hallelujah. But the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 but we have the mind of Christ.

We have the mind of Christ. We are His earthly temple here on this earth. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 he says the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Not letting these stray thoughts carry us anymore. Oh folks, don't let the devil don't let the flesh ever convince you that what you left behind is worth looking back to.

There's nothing in this world that's ever going to satisfy you. As a matter of fact the Apostle Peter says it's all going to be dissolved one day. Even the very elements are going to be on fire.

There's going to be nothing left. Only the pureness of Christ within His earthly tabernacle will be left. In the book of John chapter 2 I want to read it to you because time is slipping away.

It says In the Jews, Passover was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made a scourge of small cords He drove them all out of the temple the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers money and overthrew the tables.

And He said to them that sold doves take these things out of here hence and make not My Father's house a house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written the zeal of Thine house has eaten Me up. Jesus walked into the temple and it's not because He was angry with the people.

It's not because He was mad because they were doing all of these things. It's because He wanted the hearts of His people. He wanted the hearts of His bride.

He knew these things were standing in the way between Him and His beloved. And folks, that was what this message is all about tonight. That there are things in our lives that are standing between us and God.

And it's evidenced by our inability to pray. When you're buying and selling, when you're selling doves in the name of the Lord, pursuing gain with religious motives, when you're changing money, the love of money to the pursuit of pleasure, when you're carrying through your vessel those deep, deep longings for the things that you left behind, it's a hindrance and it stops you from being a house of prayer. When these things are finally laid down and laid to rest by the power of Almighty God, when you're finally fully surrendered to Christ as your Savior, to His purposes, say, Lord, it's like in a marriage relationship, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, in sickness or in health, till death do us part.

You're mine, O God, and I'm yours. You have my life to do with it whatever you want to do with it. Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus.

If Jesus were to walk in bodily form into this house tonight, what would He say to you? And you? And you? It would be interesting tonight if He came into this place in bodily form and started walking through because you now are His temple. I am His temple. And He began walking the aisles and looking one at a time and He would say, House of prayer, den of thieves.

House of prayer, den of thieves. House of prayer, den of thieves. Only God can give us the wisdom to understand the heart of God tonight.

He wants you to know His heart. But in order to know His heart, these other things have got to be removed out of your life. They've got to be pushed out of the way.

Absolutely scourged. And that's got to be the prayer. I remember praying that prayer several years ago.

I read the scripture and I said, God, take the scourge of Your Word to my life. Go into my heart and cast out whatever's in me that stops me from praying like I want to pray. You see, folks, it's been a quest of mine for several years.

God, cast it out of my life. Be merciless, Lord. Go into this temple.

This is a temple like you did in Jerusalem in the days of the sacrifice. Go into this temple. Take the scourge of Your Word by the power of Your Spirit.

In my covenant, God, I invite You into my heart. And I invite You to take that scourge and go into my heart and throw out any places where I'm buying and selling. And throw out, overturn any places where I'm changing the overt pursuit of gain to the love of pleasure.

Throw out my desire for sleep, oh, God, when You want me to share Your heart. Throw out these things out of my life once and for all. God, anything that I'm doing that's greed masked with religious motives, God, take the scourge of Your Word and throw it out of my heart once and for all.

Throw it out of my life. Be merciless with it, oh, God. And, Lord, if I'm carrying in this earthen vessel desires and longings for the things that I left behind, bring it to my understanding.

And then, God, give me the courage to understand that in the name of Christ I have the power to cast down imaginations. And all of the things that exalt themselves or let themselves up against the knowledge of God. Lord Jesus, be merciful to me, oh, God, and come into my life.

And that's got to be the cry of His church's bride in this last hour of time. God, be merciful to me. We're not asking God to be angry.

We're not asking God to do us harm. But be merciful, Lord God. If You can't look at me, Lord, with Your sovereign eyes and say, this man, this woman is a house of prayer.

It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer. It's a place like in the days of Solomon where people will raise their hands. They will cry from a heart that has a true burden of God upon it.

And I'll be able to respond with fire. I'll be able to respond with my presence. I'll be able to bring deliverance to those that are being prayed for.

Oh, God, touch my heart. Father, Father, I've delivered this word as You've given it to me tonight. Lord, I've held nothing back.

And I know, like I know, like I know that I've touched Your heart. Lord, Jesus, You desire, You desire. We sing about it tonight.

You desire to dwell in the praises of Your people. You desire to come into broken vessels. We sing it, oh God.

Lord, but help us to live it. Father, I ask, oh God, that You would open my life and anything in my life that's causing me not to be able to pray, Lord, the way You desire, not to be able to lay hold of You the way You want. Lord, take it out of my life.

Take it out of my life, Father. God, that's the cry of my heart tonight, Lord. I want to touch heaven and see deliverance come to those around.

Jesus, Jesus, Lord, Jesus, all You ever wanted was fellowship with Your people, oh God. Lord, it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer. Oh, God forbid that I should ever be found a den of thieves before You, Lord.

Father, I pray for Your people tonight. I ask, oh God, for an open heaven and open hearts to be able to receive this message tonight, to be able to embrace it and hold to it in the inward parts and to invite You to come in and to scourge false motives and to scourge buying and selling and to scourge the love and pleasure out of our lives, oh God. Oh, Lord Jesus, oh God, it's not that You're against any of these things, it's the love of these things that takes us away from You, oh God.

Oh, Lord, let You be our first love and let Your desires be our first desire, oh God. As the deer panted for the water, so long is my soul for Thee, oh God. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

You said the first commandment is the greatest, Thou shalt love the Lord, your God, with all Your heart and Your soul and Your mind and Your strength and Thou shalt love Thy neighbor as Thyself, oh God. Let this be in our prayers, oh God. Oh, Jesus, touch Your church tonight, God, touch Your body.

I ask it in Your precious and holy name. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Would You stand, please?

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