

What Can We Do To Help Men Act Like Men?

Mark 11:11-19, Matthew 21:12-17, Luke 19:45-48

Good morning men! Well here we are again, it's Friday, it's the Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study, and we are in the series *Hanging Out with Jesus*. So what we're doing is we're going through each of the stories in the Bible and we are reconstructing the chronological order. I'm using a specific version of that; different people have different ideas about how that works. What we're trying to do is even though we're looking at the stories of Jesus and we are looking at the historical story, this is an application oriented Bible study. So what that means is we're trying to look at what was happening in that situation, but then also as bring that forward to today and apply it to our lives so that we can have some news that we can use.

One of my little formulas is that I'm looking at what's true, what's new, and what's you. What's true, that's the principle in the text, what's new, that's the insight that might apply to us, what's you, that's the application, how to take. I use a different formula every week but that's the formula I'm using this week. So in this text, we'll spend a lot of time talking about how it applies to us today.

Let's go ahead and do a shout out. This is the actual flyer that a group is using called Fishers of Men. It's a men's leadership group. Rory Rex Rothrock is the leader of this. He's a pastor in Butler, GA. They meet on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of every month at 9:00 AM. They also take the online Bible Studies and rebroadcast them on the local television station up there in Butler. Great group of guys, so please join me in giving Fishers of Men a rousing Man in the Mirror welcome! One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, glad to have you with us!

I ran across this a long time ago and never really thought about using it, but somehow I ran across it this morning and it just seemed to fit. There were five houses of worship in a small Texas town. There was a Presbyterian church, a Baptist church, a Methodist church, a Catholic church, and a Jewish synagogue. Each of these houses of worship was overrun with pesky squirrels. The Presbyterians got together, the elders met, they prayed about it, and they determined that it had been predestined that these squirrels would be in the church. So they decided to do nothing and let the squirrels run free. At the Baptist church, the squirrels had taken up residence in the baptistery, and so they decided they would put a cover on the baptistery and drown the squirrels. Somehow they broke free, and next week there were twice as many squirrels. The Methodist church got together and they decided that it was inhumane not to treat all of God's creation with dignity. So they trapped the squirrels then set them free a few miles out of town. Of course, three weeks later, they were all back. The Catholic church came up with the most innovative idea, they baptized each of the squirrels and registered them as members. Now they only see them on Christmas and Easter. Meanwhile over at the Jewish synagogue, they took one squirrel and went through a ceremony called circumcision and they have never seen a squirrel since.

The Role of the Church in the Plan of the Savior

I grew up in a church, but it was a church that failed my family. It was a moral failure because our church did not disciple my father to be a Godly man, husband and dad. Our church did not lead me into the Gospel of Jesus to receive faith. So it was a colossal moral failure, one we're still recovering from, I've talked about that in the past. When I became a man and surrendered my life to Christ, it was in a church

that some men recognized that I didn't know how to be a Godly man, husband and father. Some men took me under their wings, they disciplined me into the Gospel and how to work it into the different areas of my life. Some of those men are here right now. They taught me how to be a man of God. The point of this is it really does take a man to teach a man how to be a man, or it takes a man to teach a boy how to be a man. The most important context in which this is done, if you think about it, the church is both an organism and an organization. We are the church and we all understand that, but God works through structures too, and if you think about the power of the church as an institution, if it wasn't for the church, where would you get weddings? Where would you get baptisms, where would you get confirmations, where would you get fellowship dinners, who would visit you when you were sick and in the hospital, where would be the great hospitals, where would be the universities, who would be organizing coalitions for the homeless, who would be taking care of unwed mothers? So the church is an incredibly valuable institution.

What is happening today, though, is that a lot of men, a lot of people, are abandoning this institution. In fact, today church attendance in the United States is about 18%. Now you've heard for years and years the Gallup statistics that 40% of people go to church, however, there is a thing in social sciences called the social desirability bias. So when someone asks you did you go to church this week, you want to give the answer that is pleasing to them. 40% of people say yes, however, when a different question is asked, what did you do last weekend, the number drops to 18% of the people saying that they went to church. So when they had to identify their own activities, a more realistic answer came out. Here's an even more distressing number, 18% of all Americans, but only 13% of men in America are actively involved in weekly church. So a lot of people have abandoned the church.

I was talking to a business man this week. He was telling me that a lot of his successful Christian friends have basically given up on the church and they're doing their entire ministry in the market place. What I want to do this morning is I want to help you see what Jesus thinks about the church and why the church is worth reforming rather than abandoning. The title of the message is *What Can We Do To Help Men Act Like Men*, because when the church is the church, men become men. When the church stops being the church, men stop being men. There is a direct correlation between men being men and the church being the church and we're going to see that in this text today. So as you can see this is very application oriented today.

The direction from today's text is that Jesus is going to show us that he is reinforcing our keeping or getting the church on mission. We're going to be looking at Mark 11 starting at verse 11. In the last message we looked at the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and then at verse 11 it says:

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

So now there are four days until the crucifixion:

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

Now this text we're going to look at is bookended by this fig tree story, so this is the first bookend, and then the story we're going to look at today, and then next week we'll come back to this fig tree thing

and look at the end of the story and do the lesson there. So for today though, verse 15, that's to keep the chronology in order:

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, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

So here's the situation. The temple was in Jerusalem, and faithful Jews came from far distances to Jerusalem to make sacrifices for this annual event. However, it was too difficult to bring livestock for the sacrifices, so they brought their money instead. Then they had a very worthwhile system of purchasing the animals needed for sacrifices at the temple, hence the buying and selling of these animals. Why did they need money changers? Some of the currencies were foreign currencies and they had to be converted into the local currency, so they had money changers. So what was going on was that these things had become distractions from the mission of the temple. In this particular case, the leadership of the temple had either winked at people turning the work into a profit making business or they were participating in it themselves, so doing the work of God had become a money making enterprise. Anybody ever heard of that in our generation? So when Jesus saw this, and by the way it says he would not allow anybody to carry merchandise through the temple courts, it became chaotic, people would have to go a long way around. So this was taking place in the court of the Gentiles, so this is the outer court, and Gentiles were still encouraged to come to the temple to become Jews and go through that process. So this was the biggest area, the least important area, but it was a long way around the temple, so people would just cut through, doing secular business using the church as a cut through. That's the situation.

The problem with this was that Jesus saw that they were not treating the temple with the respect it deserved. They were not treating the house of God as something sacred, a place of holiness, a place of worship, a place of quiet, a place of retreat, a sanctuary. It was no longer a sanctuary; it was now more a reflection of what was taking place in culture. They just brought the culture into the church; they didn't take the church into the culture! So it was becoming secularized, and his response was what? He drove out these people! It was inappropriate, it was to be a place for the conversion of the Gentiles and instead it was all about making money and chaos, and it was certainly not a quiet place anymore. He had no patience with this whatsoever.

His solution was not to abandon the temple. It wasn't working like it was supposed to; your church may not be working like it's supposed to, or you may know churches that are not working like they are supposed to, but Jesus did not abandon the temple. Instead, he went about the process of reforming the temple. That was the mission, to reform that which was broken, to fix that which was broken, not throw it away. So he cleansed and he purified and he said this is to be a house of prayer for all the nations.

Then something else happened in this text that we need to make sure we comment on, and that is by doing this, Jesus so deeply offended the leaders of the church (and I may be doing the same thing here, I don't know!), that four days later they killed him. In other words, Jesus thought that reforming and rebuilding the temple was so profoundly important that he pulled the pin on the grenade. He did, he pulled the pin on the grenade, the one that would take his own life. Look what it says, verse 18:

The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Jesus understood the importance of the church. Now, the Christian church is the successor for the temple, so Jesus understood that in Christianity the fulfillment of the Judaism that we are spiritual Jews and that when the church is acting badly, men will act badly. That's what was happening when I grew up in a church that did not teach me, I ended up behaving badly. So the entire nation was behaving badly because the church had become secular. So the Big Idea today is this, and I guess I should have put this up earlier: **The best way to help men act like men is to help the church act like the church.** What we're talking about here in this first session is the role of the church in the plan of the Savior, and the role of the church in the plan of the savior is that it is the place where people come to worship God, to learn about God, to become his follower, and it is not meant to be a place of profiteering. It is not meant to be a place of secularization. So we've seen this not just in this time of Jesus, but all through the ages. It happened then, it happened during the holy crusades, it happened during the Spanish Inquisition, the church got it wrong. It happened in the 19th and 20th centuries with liberalism working its way into the church.

Today we have consumerism in the church, the secularization of the church where we're bringing management principles into the church and we're running it like a business. So all of these things are corruptions that are inappropriate, and Jesus wanted us to see in this text a model of how he dealt with those corruptions back then as a model for how we should deal with them now because of the impact it has on us and other men. So now we see that only 13% of men in the country are actually going to church. Why is that? That's because of this church that Jesus says is so precious that it's worth the effort to get it right, it's worth the effort to reform. The Big Idea today: **The best way to help men act like men is to help the church act like the church,** that's what Jesus is getting across here. He's trying to get the church to act like the church, and the application for us is that when men are behaving badly, the reason that they are behaving badly is that they do not understand the Gospel. They are not applying the Gospel. They may even be professing Christians, but that's like men we see come here all the time. They have enlisted and been issued a rifle, but never learned how to clean and shoot it. So they need to be trained, and there's is no other organization, institution, nor group of people who cares more about men getting it right, not behaving badly, there's nobody who cares as deeply about that as Jesus Christ. He has established his church to help solve that problem! So the best way to help those men act like men is to help the church act like the church, not to abandon the church, but to get in there and reform it! Let's do something to put it back to its rightful place! The bride of Christ is wearing a tattered gown, and it's up to us to go in and to reform it, even at the risk of pulling the pin on the grenade, even if you become persona non grata or worse at your own institution.

Now that doesn't mean you don't use tact and grace and mercy, unless of course your gifts are more prophetic gifts, then you may find that a little difficult. But the point is that there's a way to go about this. Jesus is going about this as a prophet. Jesus said in John 12 I did not come to judge the world but to save it. So he came to save the world but he still is the judge and so he is prefiguring here, he is foreshadowing his role as the judge. Someday there will be a judgment, and this is something that in today's church a lot of younger pastors want to airbrush over, to not talk about judgment and the sinfulness of sin and leave it out of Christianity, the moral absolutes that are just so clear in the Bible. If Jesus was here maybe this is something he would be talking about today.

Mission Creep, Setting Boundaries

Next, let's talk about mission creep, and setting some boundaries. So what is the mission of the church? Jesus gave us one mission for the church, what is it? Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you, and lo, I will be with you always even to the end of the age. We call that the Great Commission. So the mission of the church is singular in the mind of Jesus, it's making disciples who are called to live in Christ, equipped to live like Christ, and sent to live for Christ. Making disciples who are called to live in Christ means men who know God, who have made professions of faith and are born again, who have salvation and eternal life. What good is any of this, if a man gains the whole world yet forfeits his life? None! So job one has to be making disciples and the first part of that is calling them to be Christians, to touch first base. Then, equipping them to live like Christ, that's why these men are behaving badly here in this passage, it's because nobody equipped them to live by the Gospel of Jesus, and then sent them to live for Christ.

So, that's the mission, and you can see how easy it is for mission creep to set in, because in your churches as well as this church back then there are so many problems that come up every day. Urgent things that need to be taken care of, people going into hospitals, people needing counseling, people with financial problems, people out of work, people hungry, homeless, poor; all these problems are very real and necessary problems. So the tendency is to skip over calling people to live in Christ and then equipping them to live like Christ, the need is workers and so we need you over here doing the work. So we put you to work, but we don't touch first or second base. This happens all the time.

So Jesus did not say all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me, therefore go and make workers of all nations, brow beat them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! He knows we need workers but he has a process for doing that, it's called discipleship. So there may be some of you here doing the work of God and you're exhausted. The reason that you're exhausted is that you don't have enough Jesus for yourself, much less enough left to give over to somebody else. So the message for you today is to focus on your own walk, but if you are strong you should know that there are other men all around you who are exhausted too, because they have not been discipled. The mission has been short circuited. In our religious organizations, it is easy to fall into that cliché trap of not being able to see the forest for the trees, all of these daily problems and we forget what the big picture is. So it's good from time to time to step back and review what the main thing is, and Jesus is doing that in this passage. So that's the reality. Jesus said it's supposed to be a house of prayer and worship, but you're making it into a den of thieves. So when the church is not doing what it is primarily intended to do, then they're not going to be helping men to become men.

So how do we fix that? We restore some boundaries. We set some boundaries on what we're going to do. I guess that's a talk for another day, but that's what Jesus is doing here, setting boundaries on what the church is about, and the best way for us to help the men around us including ourselves act like men is to help the church act like the church. I think it's worth noting that this is both the institutional church as well as the organic part of the church. This table right here, the best way for you to help men act like men is for you as a church to act like a body of Christ, but then also in your church organizations, Baptist, Presbyterian, whatever it is, you stay on mission. You don't allow mission creep to come into that organization. One way to do that is to look at this text and see how jealous Jesus is to protect the mission of his church.

The Urgent Need for Reformation Starts With Us

Finally, the urgent need for reformation starts with us. Think about this: without the church, who is it that is going to build healthy men? Who out there do you know is on any significant level building healthy men that's not a church? You find many organizations teaching you how to develop job skills so you can be excellent in your work and that's fantastic, and there are lots of organizations that are sort of inspiring you to be positive people and do your time management, and those things are good. Then men use those skills, positive attitudes, and desires for success to neglect families and chase the dollar. So who is it that's building healthy men? It's the church, the church that we're abandoning, and Jesus says don't abandon the church, reform it, even if you have to pull the pin on the grenade. That's how we help men act like men, by discipling them into the Gospel and surrounding them with the people who share a love for that Gospel, a community of people. So if you want to restore healthy marriages, restore healthy men. If you want to restore healthy families, restore healthy men. If you want to restore healthy churches, restore healthy men. If you want to restore healthy communities, restore healthy men. If you want to restore healthy government, restore healthy men. If you want to restore a healthy education system, restore healthy men. If you want to restore healthy businesses, restore healthy men. Do you get it? It's about the men! If we get men right, we will get marriages right, and if we get marriages right we'll get families right. If we get families right, we'll get churches right, and if we get churches right, we'll get businesses, governments, and communities right. It really is about the men.

The Big Idea today: **The best way to help men act like men is to help the church act like the church.**
Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Heavenly father, thank you for this profound example of Jesus elevating the sacredness and the preciousness of the church, and rather than turning his back on it, his desire to reform it. Lord, the church today, we know, the numbers are there, the anecdotes are there, yet the church is in disarray. There are so many sharp people that are doing great things, Lord, and we pray that all those things spill over into the churches and that we would be willing to be your agents of change in our institutions of worship. Lord, that's the only way we're ever going to help these men out there that are acting like boys that are not growing up. These men who are doing these corrupt things, we need to bring them into the Gospel of Jesus, back to the mission of the church. So you alone, Spirit, know what you want to say to each of us from this text, and I pray now that you would thunder that into our minds, in Jesus' name, amen!