

**Encouraging Words From Your Pastor**  
**“May Our Church Be A House Of Prayer”**  
**Matthew 21:12-17**

**Introduction**

**A. My Last Sermon Series To Be Preached At Christ Covenant**

1. The **first** message was to individual Christians about the necessity of a daily walk with Jesus Christ
2. The **second** message was to individual Christians about the calling of every Christian to be committed in ministry by using the spiritual gifts that God has given each one of us.
3. **Today**, I want to speak to the entire church body about the **ABSOLUTE NECESSITY** of being a church of prayer.

**B. Our Experience In Revival Prayer**

1. About five and a half years ago, Jim Dallery, our Associate Pastor, came to me to ask if he could go to a two day prayer summit in Birmingham, Alabama.
  - a. I asked him what they were going to be “doing” at the two day prayer summit
  - b. he said that they were going to be praying for two days.
  - c. I then asked him; “Will you pray for two days?” and He said yes.
2. After Jim returned from the prayer summit, I found out what they had been praying about for two days: **they had been praying for revival.**
  - a. so, the elders here at Christ Covenant decided that we too wanted to institute a prayer ministry that would pray for revival.
  - b. so, for the last 5 ½ years, there have been revival prayer groups all through our church praying for revival
    1. I have asked each of our staff to create a revival prayer cell to pray for revival in their respective ministries
    2. other groups have been meeting as well to pray for revival
    3. there are approximately 10 revival prayer cells meeting each week in our church.
3. And, the results have been amazing
  - a. let me say first that there have been some hard times as God has been dealing with us as a church; especially regarding repentance
  - b. and, there have been some great times
  - c. **WITHOUT A DOUBT, I HAVE SEEN A REAL IMPACT ON:**
    1. individuals coming to grips with their sins
    2. people getting converted
    3. a spirit of unity and blessings
      - a. Jim Dallery
      - b. Seth Hammond
      - c. my preaching

### C. Your Experiences In Revival Prayer

1. **First**, let me thank all of those who have been praying for revival faithfully for the past five and a half years.
  - a. I know that you have been praying faithfully, sometimes wondering what God is doing
  - b. let me assure you, **HE HAS BEEN WORKING IN WAYS THAT I HAVE NEVER SEEN**
  - c. others have changed and I have changed
2. and, **second**, let me encourage the rest of you to get involved in a revival prayer cell.
  - a. do you want your life to change?
  - b. do you want to see God bless our church?

### D. Jesus' Expectation Of Prayer

1. Today, I want us to see Jesus' passion for prayer
2. and, not only will we see His personal passion to pray but also desiring that His church be a "house of prayer"

## I. A PERSPECTIVE OF PRAYER

### A. The TYPICAL CHRISTIAN'S VIEW Of Prayer.

1. If statistics are correct, **most Christians pray very little.**
  - a. the average **evangelical Christian** prays only **one minute a day.**
  - b. while the typical **evangelical Pastor** prays only **four minutes a day.**
2. Here are some **interesting statistics** from Christian pollster George Barna:
  - a. more than **four out of five adults (82%)** pray **during a typical week.**
  - b. **women (88%)** are more likely than are **men (75%)** to **pray in a given week.**
  - c. Americans believe in the power and impact of prayer. **Four out of five (82%)** believe that **"prayer can change what happens in a person's life."**
  - d. during a **typical month, one out of three adults (33%)** participate in a **group or special meeting** whose primary purpose is to pray.

### B. GOD'S VIEW Of Prayer.

1. **LOOK AT THE SCRIPTURE AND YOU WILL SEE THAT GOD MOVES WHEN PEOPLE PRAY.**
  - a. **Moses** prayed to God to part the Red Sea.
  - b. the people of God prayed as they were led by **Joshua** around the walls of Jericho before the walls fell.
  - c. after the **early church** prayed in Acts 2, God brought down His Spirit at Pentecost.
  - d. **Jesus** spent His life in prayer.
  - e. **Paul** spent His life in prayer.

- 2. EVERY MOVE OF GOD’S SPIRIT IN REVIVAL HAS BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE PRAYER OF GOD’S PEOPLE. As Dr. A.T. Pierson once said, “There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in unified prayer.”**
- a. **the early church**
    1. was “birthed” in a prayer meeting
    2. prayer continued to be their focus
  - b. **1100’s – 1300’s**
    1. **John Hus - a man of deep prayer** brought revival to **Bohemia** and prepared the world for the work of **Martin Luther**.
    2. **John Wycliff – a man of deep prayer**, brought the Bible to the people of **England**
  - c. **1500’s**
    1. **Martin Luther**
      - a. **spent 3 hours a day in prayer**
      - b. he prayed all night before appearing before the Roman Church. A man spying on Luther said, **“Who can overcome such a man who prays thus?”**
    2. **John Calvin** rose at **4:00 a.m. each morning** to pray.
  - d. **1600’s** – Pastor **Richard Baxter** began his ministry in **Kidderminster, England**. Concerned about the spiritual immaturity of his flock, Baxter **“Prayed until the walls of his study became stained with his breath.”**
  - e. **1700’s**
    1. In **1734**, a revival commenced under a 31-year-old preacher named **Jonathan Edwards** who led many teenagers out of their sin.
    2. The **Great Awakening in the American colonies** spread during the **1740’s** under the influence of a 23-year-old itinerant preacher from England – **George Whitefield** – who, together with John and Charles Wesley, **had formed a small prayer band at Oxford University ten years earlier**. This group was derided at Oxford being called the **“Holy Club”** and the **“Methodists”** by the other students in scorn.
    3. In **1794**, it was with heavy hearts that **23 New England ministers** met together on a winter day to discuss and consider what could be done to halt the flood of ungodliness that had ravaged the nation. The question was, what could **they do** to precipitate such a revival? **They had only one answer – pray**. A call was sent out to all churches and all Christians in the nation to pray specifically for revival. The **Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Moravians, and many other churches adopted the plan**. **Soon, all of America was saturated with the prayers of God’s people**. Then the breakthrough came. **Revival broke out in Connecticut and soon swept throughout the country**.

f. 1800's

1. In **1806**, a group of five students at **Williams College** gathered **under a haystack** to pray for revival and world evangelization. But in a short while the Holy Spirit was poured out and many students were saved. This revival spread from college to college throughout America and gave rise to the **American World Missions' Movement**.
  2. By **1857**, bitter division over **the issue of slavery and a gradual weakening of the church** had brought our nation to a place of desperate need for revival. In September of that year, **Jeremiah Lamphier**, a former businessman turned lay missionary, decided that the businessmen of New York City would profit themselves and their city by a weekly prayer meeting. There was nothing special about the first meeting. Jeremiah waited alone for the first 30 minutes and finally **six men showed up**. But the next week there were **14** and then **23**. It was decided to meet every day rather than weekly and soon the entire church was filled to capacity with **3,000 praying businessmen**. Prayer meetings began to spring up in other parts of the city and within **six months, 10,000 people were gathering daily** over their lunch hour to pray. At the height of this revival it was estimated that no less than **50,000 souls were professing their faith in Christ each week throughout the nation**. In one year, out of a population of **thirty million**, an estimated **one million Americans** were converted.
3. As Christians, we must understand God's love of prayer by God's people.
- a. **WHAT DID GOD CALL THE OLD TESTAMENT TEMPLE THAT HE WANTED TO BE BUILT FOR HIMSELF?**  
**Isa. 56:4-7** - For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant--to them I will give within my Temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant--these I will bring to my holy mountain **and give them joy in my house of prayer**. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; **for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.**"
  - b. all of the descriptive words that God "could" have used for HIS HOUSE, instead God called it "A house of prayer"
  - c. this is the "kind" of building we need to build here at Christ Covenant.

## II. The PAST Of The Temple

### A. The ORIGINAL Temple

1. The **purpose** of God
  - a. God created man in the Garden to “be with Him”
    1. it was **ALWAYS** God’s intent to spend intimate times with His children
    2. to talk with them
  - b. “Praying to God” was the way that God could communicate with His children
2. The **problem** of God.
  - a. **However**, after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God had “a choice” to make
    1. God could “end it all” because man did not obey Him
    2. **or . . .** God could “continue” in HIS relationship with man
  - b. however, if God was to continue in a personal relationship with man, then man would have to “pay for His sins” so that man’s relationship with God could be restored
    1. and, man would either “pay” for his sins himself
    2. or another would “pay” for his sins.
  - c. we see “this payment” in the Old Testament sacrificial system – experienced in the Old Testament Temple
3. The **plan** of God.
  - a. at this Temple, man would repent and receive forgiveness
  - b. at this Temple, man would be enabled to approach God
    1. initially, the worshippers would bring an animal to be sacrificed, represents that the animal was suffering “in place of” the sinner.
    2. eventually, Jesus, who would be “that sacrifice”
  - c. **the Temple would ULTIMATELY allow man a place to TALK TO GOD AGAIN!**

### B. The OBLIGATED Temple.

1. The **plan** of God.
  - a. the Temple was a **holy building**
    1. representative of God’s invitation for sinful man to come close to God.
    2. it was to be a “**sacred place of communication**” between God and man.
      - a. **God wanted to communicate with sinful man**
      - b. **AND, THE TEMPLE WAS “HIS METHOD” TO DO SO**
  - b. thus, the Temple represented God’s desire to talk to man.
2. The **problem** of man.
  - a. but, instead of the Temple being used to build a **RELATIONSHIP with God**

**b.** man began to use the Temple to build a **RELIGION to God**

1. the **event** of Passover

- a. God instituted a special time of the year to sacrifice animals, called Passover
- b. over the years however, the Jew did not see the Temple as a place to speak to God but a place to fulfill God's requirement of animal sacrifice
- c. once a year, all faithful Jews would make an effort to travel to go observe the Passover at the Temple in Jerusalem
- d. as many as 2.5 million people would inhabit the city of Jerusalem
- e. and they would come **TO THE TEMPLE** to make their sacrifices

2. the **extreme** of Passover

a. the **money changers**

1. **each man over 20 years of age** was required to pay a Temple tax when they came to offer their sacrifice
  - a. if the Jew could not travel to Jerusalem to pay the tax, then he could pay the tax in the town where he lived
  - b. however, if the Jew waited too long to pay his tax, he had to travel to Jerusalem to pay the tax
  - c. the tax **HAD** to be a "**Galilean Tyrian**" – a coin, minted only in Israel –
    1. any coin used to pay the Temple tax could not have the representation of a pagan foreigner on it
    2. the coin **had** to be a Jewish coin
2. **those exchanging non-Jewish coins had to exchange their coins in Jerusalem**
  - a. There would be the sellers of these particular Galilean tyrians
  - b. And the money changers would charge an exorbitant amount for the exchange of foreign currency. They would charge **6% for changing** the money and another **6% if they had to give the person change.**

3. so . . . the moneychangers were essentially STEALING from the Jews who came to the Temple
- b. the **merchants**
  1. each Jewish worshipper also had to offer a sacrifice for he or his family during the Passover
    - a. he would either have to sacrifice a male, unspotted lamb or a dove
    - b. many of the worshippers would bring an animal with them to be sacrificed
  2. although many Jews would bring their own sacrifices with them from their home:
    - a. however, most if not all, of the animals brought by worshippers would not be “deemed acceptable for sacrifice”
    - b. **so the Jewish people would be forced to buy animals from these merchants at the Temple who had acceptable animals to sell**
      1. some estimates were that there may have been as many as **250,000** lambs in the city of Jerusalem during Passover
      2. often worshippers could pay up to **10 times the original cost of the animals** that they had bought on their own
      3. to add to the abuse of the worshipper, Annas, the **High Priest, usually got a “cut”** from the merchants for allowing them to sell their animals in the Temple area.

### III. The PROBLEM In The Temple

#### A. The ARRIVAL Of Jesus.

##### 1. His entrance into Jerusalem.

- a. on Sunday of Passover week, Jesus rode a donkey through the city gate of Jerusalem
- b. palm branches and clothes were thrown down before Him as He rode into the city
- c. Jesus was not merely “strolling” into Jerusalem
- d. in actuality, Jesus was riding into the city of Jerusalem to present His body for crucifixion on that following Friday.

## 2. His entrance into the Temple.

### a. the **structure** of the Temple

#### 1. the **Court of the Priests**

- a. only Priests could participate in this area
- b. it consisted of the altar, laver, Holy Place and the Holy of Holies
- c. this was the most sacred area of the whole Temple

#### 2. the **Court of the Israelites**

- a. other Jews were allowed to worship and meet together for joint services on great feast days
- b. only Jews could participate in this area
- c. this also was where they brought their sacrifices

#### 3. the **Court of the Women**

- a. this was the only area that Jewish women could worship at the Temple
- b. also services for men and women were held here

#### 4. the **Court of the Gentiles**

- a. there was a particular area for non-Jews
- b. here the Gentiles were invited to find out about Jehovah God

### b. the **spectacle** of the Temple

#### 1. imagine the **sound** of the Temple

##### a. it must have been **deafening**

1. the sound of coins being exchanged, perhaps dropping on the floor of the courtyard
2. the sound of merchants calling out for people to come to their booth to exchange their coins or buy their sacrificial animals

##### b. there was the “**sound of stealing**”

1. charging too much for the exchange of coins
2. charging too much for the sacrificial animals

#### 2. imagine the **smell** of the Temple

- a. there were literally thousands of animals waiting to be sacrificed
- b. BOTH of these sensations would have greeted you as you came into the Temple area

#### 3. these were the sensations that affected Jesus as He walked into the Temple area

- a. a Temple meant for worship
- b. a Temple built to allow sinful man to come to God
- c. a Temple called by Isaiah and HOUSE OF PRAYER!

## B. The ATTACK Of Jesus.

**Vs. 12 - “Jesus entered the Temple area 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.”**

1. It is easy to understand Jesus’ reaction to the scene and the smell as He approached the Temple; **HE LOST IT!**

a. **Max Lucado**, like others says: “Like most Christians;”

- I love the mental picture of Jesus the **Good Shepherd** putting the lamb on His shoulders and carrying it to safely.
- I love the **soft image of the Baby in the manger.**
- I love the **story about Christ feeding the hungry** multitudes with bread and fish.
- When I think about **Jesus dying on the cross** to pay for my sin, I’m deeply moved.
- I marvel at the sight of him **bursting out of the tomb**, alive on Resurrection morning.
- **But there is one picture of Jesus that, frankly, doesn’t seem to fit. It is so stunning that I wonder why God would even put it in the Bible.**

b. Jesus’ response happened almost immediately and instinctively

1. Jesus **alone** began to drive the money changers and merchants out of the Temple area.

a. the word **drove** in the Greek means:

1. to expel a person with violence
2. to compel one to depart with haste with a force you cannot resist.

**3. Jesus is speaking in a stern voice WITH THE INTENT TO CAST FEAR.**

b. the word **overthrow** in the greek means:

1. that Jesus grabbed one side of the money changers’ table AND FLIPPED THEM OVER!
2. MONEY WOULD HAVE BEEN FLYING EVERYWHERE!

2. **WHY DID JESUS “LOSE IT” AS HE ENTERED THE TEMPLE AREA**

a. **Jim Cymbala – Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire** - “The twelve disciples were no doubt just as stunned as the crowd; at Jesus’ reaction. **All by himself Jesus started** pitching over the tables, blocking people who were carrying things, and saying, **“Get out of here with that!** You can’t bring that through the courts.” He stormed over to the merchants of oxen and sheep and doves, saying, **“Out! Get your business out of here!”**

What made God's Son so agitated?

**His house was being misused for purposes other than what was intended BY HIM.**

**As the feathers were flying and the coins were clattering to the pavement and the businessmen were shouting for the police, Jesus said above the roar, "This place looks and feels more like a mall than a Temple. Whatever happened to Isaiah's word about the real point of this building – to be a house of prayer for all of the nations?"**

- b. JESUS GOT SO MAD BECAUSE THE TEMPLE WAS NOT BEING USED FOR THE RIGHT PURPOSE! GOD HAD INTENDED!
2. Jesus' reaction clearly tells us what God thinks of prayer or lack of prayer in the church!

#### IV. The PURPOSE Of The Temple

##### A. A House Of PRAYER.

**Vs. 13 - "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"**

1. Then Jesus declared why He reacted in the way that He did:
  - a. the Temple was about restoring our relationship with God.
  - b. and, it had become a shopping mall!
2. **OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT WORSHIP! IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT TALKING TO GOD!**
  - a. God did not want the Jews to build a Temple to meet a religious requirement
    1. to simply have a place to sacrifice their animals
    2. to do their "religious duty"
  - b. Jesus' reaction is CLEARLY revealing what Jesus wants from His children
    1. HE DOES NOT WANT OBLIGATIONS!
    2. HE DOES NOT WANT RITUAL!
    3. HE DOES NOT WANT RELIGION!
    4. HE WANTS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP!
3. **TRUE SPIRITUALITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT THE HEART!**
4. **PLEASE NOTICE THAT JESUS DID NOT CALL THE TEMPLE A:**
  - a. a house of worship
  - b. a house of teaching
  - c. a house of fellowship
  - d. a house of ministry
  - e. **BUT . . . A HOUSE OF PRAYER!**

##### B. A House Of PEOPLE.

**Vs. 14 – "The blind and the lame came to Him at the Temple, and He healed them."**

1. Please notice that **AS SOON AS THE TEMPLE WAS CLEANSED, JESUS BEGAN TO MINISTER TO PEOPLE**

- a. **this teaches us that, BEFORE a person can come before God, they must first repent**
  - 1. the illustration of sending out the moneychangers and merchants parallels the sending out our sins “in our own Personal Temple” as we come to God in prayer
  - 2. as you come to your time of prayer
    - a. the **FIRST** thing that you should do is **confess your sins**
      - 1. what is the “merchandise” that you are being consumed with?
      - 2. what are the “issues that” are consuming your mind?
      - 3. **SO, FIRST, CONFESS YOUR SINS before** you begin to pray
        - a. ACTS
        - b. CATS
    - b. then, you will be able to enter freely to speak to Jesus
- b. **second of all, prayer is not just for you, but should be focused, as well, on the needs of others**
  - 1. notice how **quickly** Jesus began to serve others after He cleansed the Temple
  - 2. **THIS IS JESUS’ HEART.** Prayer should “lead us” to touching The lives of others.

## V. The PUNISHMENT Of The Temple.

### A. Jesus ABANDONED The Temple.

- 1. After Jesus cleansed the Temple of the moneychangers, He then left the Temple **Vs. 17** – “And He **left them and went out of the city to Bethany**, where He spent the night.”
  - a. Jesus went **EAST of the city** to a place where He was loved – to the home of Mary and Martha.
  - b. Notice what Jesus’ traveling east may represent:  
Just a few years before the destruction of the first Temple in 586 B.C., **was given a vision of the departure of the glory of the Lord from the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.** Ezekiel saw the **glory of the Lord leave the Temple through the east gate.**
  - c. Thus, Jesus walking “east” of the Temple may have represented that “the glory had departed from the Temple.”
- 2. **INSTEAD**, this is what we want God to do in “this Temple.” **II Chronicles 5:11-14** – “The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians--Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives--stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give

praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." **Then the Temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the Temple of God."**

### **B. Jesus COULD ABANDON This Temple**

1. It is my belief that God is in this place
  - a. I have been sensing His presence and His power for several years in this church
  - b. I believe that we have sensed God's presence in our church since we have been praying for revival.
2. **HOWEVER, it is NOT automatic that God will be in our church forever.**  
The story of **Ichabod – I Samuel 4:12-22 (read)**
3. Why would God's presence ever depart from this church?
  - a. because His Word is not preached
  - b. because it is led by ungodly leaders
  - c. **BECAUSE IT IS NOT A HOUSE OF PRAYER!**

### **Conclusion:**

1. **DO YOU REALIZE THE NEED FOR PRAYER IN THE CHURCH; ANY CHURCH, OUR CHURCH?**
  - a. The Lord Jesus spent hours and hours in prayer
  - b. The Apostle Paul was a man of prayer
  - c. **EVERY GREAT REVIVAL HAS COME AS A RESULT OF PRAYER**
2. **I did Not realize the impact of prayer on the church**
  - a. Please note that I believe in prayer and I have prayed over the years, **ESPECIALLY WHEN I MOVED TO KNOXVILLE TO PLANT THIS CHURCH.**
  - b. but, compared to my time of prayer now, I am sad to say that I learned this lesson of prayer at the end of my Pastoral ministry.
    1. and, for that I am very sad
    2. I only wish that I had started my ministry with the view of prayer that I now have
    3. trust me, I will be taking this message of prayer in my coaching ministry to young Pastors
3. **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE HAPPEN IN THIS CHURCH?**
  - a. do you just want to attend a friendly, teaching church?
  - b. **OR . . . DO YOU WANT TO SEE GOD MOVE?**
    1. I do not believe that God will move unless His people pray
    2. And, I don't think it's just by a "few people" who pray
    3. If this is to be a **HOUSE OF PRAYER**, the people in "this house" are called to pray.
    4. Will you become a part of a revival prayer team?
4. Once again, I want to thank all of you who have been faithful to pray for revival in our church
  - a. God has heard your praying
  - b. **SO, KEEP IT UP!**
5. But, we want to enlist others

## 6. British Preacher; Charles Spurgeon

- a. Preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for **38 years** during the 1800's. He preached to **10,000** people each Sunday
- b. During his time as the Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, it is said that he preached to some **10,000,000** people.
- c. What caused such great success in Spurgeon's ministry?
  1. "Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to the Metropolitan Tabernacle hear the famed C. H. Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the doors to the church to open, the students were greeted by a man who asked the students, "Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?" They were not particularly interested for it was a hot day in July. But they didn't want to offend the stranger so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway, where a door was quietly opened. Their guide then whispered, "**This is The Boiler Room.**" Surprised, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly closing the door, the student guide then introduced himself. It was none other than Charles Spurgeon."
  2. Spurgeon would later say about "The Boiler Room; "If the boiler room is out of action then the whole mill will grind to a halt. **We cannot expect blessings if we do not ask.**"
  3. If God wants a house of prayer; are we an "entire house of prayer" or "just a few rooms in the house?"