Ill March Madness is the highlight of college basketball. It will be covered nationwide in the media. People all over the country are studying the teams putting together their charts and making their predictions about the Road to the Final Four. In offices and in work places all across the country, there are betting pools about who will be in the final four and who will win. So a lot of people are very serious about March Madness.

Let’s face it, college basketball is a lot of fun and very entertaining, but who wins and who loses on the Road to the Final Four does not change the world one bit.

But, at this time of the year we are also reminded of the Road to Redemption that Jesus traveled that changed the world forever. Your response to the events that happened on the Road to Redemption will shape your life and determine your destiny.

The Road to Redemption began with Jesus’ Triumphant Entrance into Jerusalem. As we saw last week, this was the announcement of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Which is also called the church.

Jesus declared that He had come to win over sin, death, and the devil. He said He would build his church and the gates of hell would not overcome it.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are on the winning side!

If you are not a follower of Jesus, you can enter into the Kingdom of God through trusting in Jesus as your Savior. The doors of Christ’s Kingdom, the church, are wide open and you can be on the winning side!
After Jesus’ triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, He went to the temple. There he drove out the money changers and merchants. That act is referred to as Cleansing the Temple.

Before we leave here today, I hope we will think of Christ’s Cleansing the Temple in a much more personal way. I hope we will see the implications for your life and mine.

There is a record of Christ Cleansing the Temple, in all four of the Gospels, which indicates its great significance. Let’s look at what Mark recorded.

*Mark 11:15* 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, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. *17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: (Isaiah 56:7) "'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"
18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, NIV

Pray

In order to understand the significance and meaning of Jesus’ actions, we need to look back into the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, God used physical structure and acts to demonstrate spiritual truth.

One example was the animal sacrifices that were prescribed in the Old Testament as a covering for sin and were a part of the temple worship. The killing of an animal can never remove anyone’s sins, but God gave the people a physical act of sacrificing an animal as a way of demonstrating their faith in the coming of the Messiah who would take away the sins of the world. All the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were a simple picture of the one sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus. He died on the cross to pay for the sins of
the whole world which included all of the Old Testament saints who had believed in the Messiah before He came.

John the Baptist tied it all together. Look at his statement in John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" NIV

From Adam and Eve to the end of time, the only way anyone has ever been saved or will be saved is by putting their faith in the Messiah, who is Jesus.

The next example relates directly to the Cleansing of the Temple. The physical structure and the ceremonies associated with the temple were designed to teach spiritual truth such as:

the holiness of God,
the terribleness of sin,
the separation caused by sin,
the need for forgiveness,
and every aspect of the temple pointed to the Messiah as the one mediator between God and Man. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Jesus’ Cleansing of the Temple demonstrated that the temple belonged to God. It also demonstrated how serious God is about keeping his temple holy and only using it for God’s purposes.

Let’s look at how the Cleansing of the Temple relates to you and me today.

When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave and the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament temple was replaced with a new temple. God allowed the Old Testament temple to be destroyed in 70 AD.

God’s new temple is the body of the believer!

*1. I am the temple of God.
If you know Christ as your Savior, you are the temple of God. The Shekinah glory of God is now in you!

This was visibly demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost when fire came down from heaven and rested on each believer.

*Look at Acts 2:3* They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... NIV

*Look at 1 Corinthians 6:19* Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. NIV

Do you think of your body as being the temple of God?

*1.) Cleansing the temple reminds me to use my body and my life for the purposes of God.

The Holy Spirit living in us is the mark of ownership on each believer. We now belong to God, therefore, our lives should be used to fulfill the purposes of God. You do not belong to yourself, Christ gave His life to purchase you and you now belong to God.

Look at the quote that John gave us about Jesus the first time Jesus cleansed the temple.

*John 2:17* "Zeal for your house will consume me." NIV

That quote now applies to the believer. Jesus is consuming with the zealous desire for you and I to be completely His. He does not want us to engage in anything that is unholy.

That includes, lying, cheating, and stealing, which is what the priests were doing the day that Jesus cleansed the temple.
The moneychangers would charge high fees to exchange pagan coins for temple coins which was the only money that could be used as an offering in the temple. (If you give me $10 and I only give you $1, would you feel cheated?)

In the same way, those who sold animals for sacrifice were charged exorbitant prices. If someone brought an animal from outside the temple, the priests would simply reject it. The whole system was filled with graft and corruption. That is why Jesus said about the temple...

*Mark 11:17* ...you have made it 'a den of robbers’ NIV

Jesus will not tolerate immorality in His temple. He does not want the believer to engage in lying, cheating, and stealing. He does not want us to engage in any kind of immorality. Look at...

*1 Corinthians 6:18*  Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...

God does not want the believer to engage in any kind of sexual immorality. That includes: sex before marriage, adultery, same sex relationship, and any kind of sexual behavior outside of marriage between one man and one woman.

Jesus is zealous to keep us holy. So what do we do when we sin?

*2.)* Cleansing the temple reminds me to regularly confess my sins.

Even though a believer is the temple of God, we all struggle with sin. We must deal with sin that comes into our lives quickly and decisively. If we indulge in it, it will be our demise.
*Look at 1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. NIV

**When we agree** with God about our sin and turn away from it, He will forgive us and **restore our fellowship** with Him. **Failure to turn away from sin** only results in **more sin and heartache**.

**Here is a sad** note. The people in Jesus’ day **failed** to **repent** of their **sins** and 40 years later the **temple** and the **city** were **destroyed** and many of the people died.

**God** wants His **temple** to be **holy so you and I need to confess our sins regularly**.

**TS** *The new temple* of God is not only the **individual believer**, but it is also **all believers collectively**.

**2. The church is the temple of God.**

The reason the church is the **temple of God** is because **each believer is the temple of God**. **When we come together**, God is **present** with us because He is **in each believer**.

**Look at** what Jesus said **about the people** of God in...

**Matthew 18:20** For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." NIV

**The worship center** we gather in is **not** the **temple of God**. **The temple of God** is the **people** who are **gathered to worship**. **We should** not refer to **any building** as a **temple** or the **sanctuary of God**. **Those terms only apply** to the **people of God**.

**In this passage, Paul** talks about **the church**. He is **not talking about an individual**, but the **whole church**.
1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17... God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. NIV

The church is sacred because it is the temple of God.

*1.) Cleansing the temple reminds us to refuse to tolerate sin in the church.

The church is a sacred group of people and it holds up a standard of holiness. The Holy Spirit lives within each of us. That means we have a serious responsibility to keep the church holy and pleasing to God. We cannot just look the other way when members are living a sinful lifestyle.

When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and declared His intention to be King, the first thing He did was to cleanse the temple. He was zealous then and He is still zealous for His temple to be holy.

Now the church in the city of Corinth did not get this. They had a member who was living in sexually immorality. But the leadership of the congregation did nothing about it. They allowed the church’s testimony to be ruined by sexual immorality.

*Paul told them that allowing this sin to continue without being confronted would create more sin in the church. In this verse, yeast is just a metaphor for sin. “Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?” 1 Corinthians 5:6 NIV

When a lifestyle of sin is tolerated in the church, people start to think, “If that guy’s behavior is ok, then no one will have a problem with what I’m doing.”

Ill There was couple who were living together before they got married. When we went to them to talk to them, they said, “We did not think anyone would care.”

When sin is not confronted, it grows.
Jesus desires purity in His church... He won’t settle for anything less.

*2.) Cleansing the temple reminds us to remove barriers that keep people from Christ.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, He drove the money changers and merchants out of the Court of the Gentiles. Because of the commerce taking place there, there was no place for Gentiles to worship.

Racial prejudice played a big part in the decision to carry on business in the Court of the Gentiles. Keep in mind that the term Gentile was used to refer to all races other than Jews. The Jewish priests cared nothing for other races. That meant that everybody except the Jews were excluded from worship.

Now remember the Scripture that Jesus quoted as His justification for cleansing the temple.

*Mark 11:17 "'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations' (ethnos)?"

Notice the word “nations” it is the Greek word “ethnos” (eth'-nos); it means race or tribe. It specifically refers to a foreigner or non-Jew. God’s vision of the people of God has always been multi-ethnic.

*The very design of the Old Testament temple teaches us that.

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was open to all races and people of the world (John 10:16). This teaching infuriated the prejudiced Jewish leaders.

*Notice verse... Mark 11:18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, NIV
TS Let’s look at how this relates to the mission of the church.

*Jesus said, Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (“ethnos”), NIV

In the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church, He was careful to include the word “ethnos” once again. The church is to be inclusive and reach out to all people and races. The church is to be a multi-ethnic mosaic of worshipers that are holy and pleasing to God.

Pray